

XVI



a dead spot of light...

Introduction

Another years draws towards its end and I am still sitting here, being unable to write with ten fingers. I am not bad at typing, but the level in which I am actually able to do this could definitely be better.

Anyway, not all interviews made it into this edition, but I am somewhat satisfied about the reviews that did. 'Soizu' has finally been deal with, 'Slaughter of the Innocents' / 'Obscure Oath' split – delayed beyond any sane comprehension – appears here as well, 'I, Lord Aveu' is also able to read his review now and so is 'Gamardah Fungus'. The 'Vahrzaw' one was a review request from the Metal Archives board and I hope the person is satisfied with the result.

Well, there is enough material available for the next version already; in terms of reviews as well as interviews. Indeed, I had the chance to stumble over a considerable amount of them in the last few weeks. The focus is less metal again and more in the experimental region. What struck me though is the large amount of releases which I had not written on and the old reviews that need some polishing. The one on Epoch would be one example. It had been partially re-written, extended and hopefully with less errors than before. More of this type will be added to future edition of this magazine.

Requests of interviews and reviews are still possible ... I am always open to get in touch with new bands and artists. Also from non-metal genres.

and finally, I wish you all a nice holiday season [I personally hate Christmas] and a happy new year.

And as I do not want to write this every time in every freaking interview:

I would like to thank every band and label for the promotion material, answer and so on. And thank you for the moral support and nice e-mails ... appreciated!

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All the best ...
oneyoudontknow

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Interviews & Review Section

Gamardah Fungus

Hey there ... I hope you folks are alright and thanks for the opportunity to have an interview with you. Why don't you present some basic information on your band? Who are the members, what roles do each of them play, when was the band founded... and where do you live?

Igor:

Hello and thanks. Yeap, we are fine & now will try to answer all of your tricky questions))) What is about band? I think, it is better to listen to the music than to read about musicians. But, if it is very necessary, than everybody can find and read about us on gamardahfungus.bandcamp.com or last.fm. May be in the future we'll make a site, but now I don't think that we need it.

Absurd:

I think, especially for your readers we can explain our roles in the band. We are from Dnepropetrovsk city, Ukraine. It's one of the biggest cities in our country, after the capital named Kiev. We started play together in the end of 2009, but before we played with various bands - from punk to grunge & trip-hop, from noise to breakcore & so on... Now, in Gamardah Fungus I play guitars & all strings on all tracks. Igor play synthesizers, samplers, make various field recordings and so on. Atmosphere, you know... In the nearest future one more person will join us – Lilly, she will play a saxophone. But it's a secret now)))

What does your band name 'Gamardah Fungus' refer to? What do you try to express through it and why did you pick it after all?

Igor:

Hah, it's just a trick of words. I'm a philologist, so I like such things – puzzles, rebuses, so on...

Absurd:

Yes, we played with the words & symbols, but if you need more concrete explanation, so you can understand it meaning like some substance made of metaphysical elements that bring you to open your mind for universe. Not a drug, but elixir of wisdom.

Igor:

Yeah. A tincture on fungus!

Your first release, as far as I could make out, had been a split with the band Voida. Why did you pick this band and what kind of music could be found on the split? How had it been distributed?

Absurd:

Yes, Voida is a good fellow & our friend in music from Kiev!

Igor:

That was really our first release. We devoted that track to a great person – Egor Letov. He was a soviet Russian poet, punk musician & a very interesting man. I hope, you'll try to find music of his band Гражданская Оборона on Internet – it is really underground! And that track was much post-rock with melancholic guitar passages. Now we play another kind of music. And what's about Voida. We made a cd-r with him & gave it to our friends. That's all. Neither we are, no Voida make a name or money with it. It was friend-release. Voida's name is Igor, he lives in Kiev and besides Voida, he plays in a bunch of projects. The most famous is Stoned Jesus. You'll need to surf in Internet – it's nice stoner, you know.

When you started the band, then what kind of music did you have had in mind? Had there been a certain idea, some kind of sound or style you wanted to play? In terms of influences, are there bands that had an impact on you and made you create this particular type of sound?

Igor:

I listen to a huge massive of music. Gigabytes weekly. Certainly, there are favorite bands & musicians, like a Sunn O))), Bohren Und Der Club Of Gore, Xenakis, Riley, Fennesz, etc., but we never planned to play any concrete genre or style. We wanted play music. In our music we unite ambient, drone, field recordings, funeral doom, minimalism, post-rock, instrumental. Now we try to experiment with noir jazz. There is no a certain idea of genre, main idea – to make something that keep our hearts alive!

Absurd:

When we started a project each of us just showed his thoughts, soul & experience to another. We didn't analyze what is actual or stylish in the world music scene today. Hah, even now! Fuck it! We adopted one of another experiences and in such way made our records. Among my favorite musicians are Frank Zappa, Universe Zero, Krzysztof Penderecki, Pink Floyd, John Zorn, Miles Davis, John Coltrane and so so so on...

Nocharizma had been the label for your first solo release and on it the listener can already find some of the core elements of your music: longer tracks, samples, a (clear) separation between metal and non metal. (Ambient vs some form of metal or noise).

Why can't you write short music and why do you tend to separate the two different types of sound in such a way from each other?

Absurd:

Our music is a flow of a soul & fantasy; this is like a performance of northern shaman who takes your mind into trance with his "music". Our music is an expression of emotions with musical instruments & and we don't care about the length of our tracks – it is depend only for our minds flow when we play. Besides, we don't take any drugs. It's a very often question among our listeners.

Igor:

All those separations in our music are present in the universe. Evil and good, war and piece, black and white, love and hate... Nature is ideal. Our world consists of elements, which support equilibrium in the nature. So we are. I like equilibrium in everything; this is one of the main ideas of my life.

Two Hemispheres, Two Worlds is nearly consistent in this approach ... with the exception of the last track. Why did you add something 'different' to an otherwise constant way of crafting music?

Absurd:

The last one is a fully dark part of that LP. And the second one, Kurtulus, is fully light part.

Igor:

Equilibrium, you know. Besides, I think it's a nice track, so why we shouldn't put it into album?

How long does it take you to get an album done? How do you start the writing process and how did you deal with the recording process? Did you use some kind of professional studio?

Igor:

We can make one track during a month, but also can make an album for a week. I don't think that it's normal to say exactly time of record an album. This is a creation process, no handicraft. It depends on emotions, thoughts, and impressions, which we bring in our sweet home studio or in a big professional studio in another city in our country.

Absurd:

Yes, we are. All albums that we made till today were recorded for six month. First of all this is an appearance of idea. It can be anything: experiment with the sound, melody that blew my mind, situation on the street or a second at home. Than, in studio we take all arsenals of our devices and try to realize an idea. We use dictaphones, circuit bending devices, synths, guitars, effects, hand-made instruments, rare and unique things that we found or buy somewhere before. Something like that.



In the fourth track on your recent release 'Celestial Burials' the tracklist suggests that an additional musician supported you. Who is Tenzin Sambu? What role did he play in this track?

Igor:

Tenzin is my business partner from Tibet. We met each other in 2011 and very quickly became friends. It was he, who has told me about celestial funerals tradition. I've retold this to Absurd and we were so astonished of such worldview that decided to take these words as a name of an album. And Tenzin kindly agreed to record something like mantra uses for that tradition in his country.

Furthermore, I like the vocal style you use at the end of the track, but I would like to have seen or heard overtones as well. Is there a chance that you use something like this on a future release?

Absurd:

Maybe, we don't know yet. But if you like it, we'll think about this)

According to you label you used some self-made instruments for your latest recording. Which were these? What is a waterphone and a kalimba?

Igor:

Yes, I've recorded sounds of kalimba and waterphone and than we've used them in Adocatus Diaboli and Revolver Theme.

Kalimba is often called thumb piano. This is an African musical instrument, a type of plucked idiophone common throughout Sub-Saharan Africa. I recorded it in my friend's house when he brought it from a vacation. Than put some reverb & delay and used as effects.

A waterphone is a type of atonal acoustic musical instrument constructed largely of a steel resonator "bowl" with a cylindrical "neck", which may or may not contain a small amount of water, and with brass rods around the rim of the bowl. The waterphone produces a vibrant ethereal type of music. You can read more about it here: <http://www.waterphone.com>

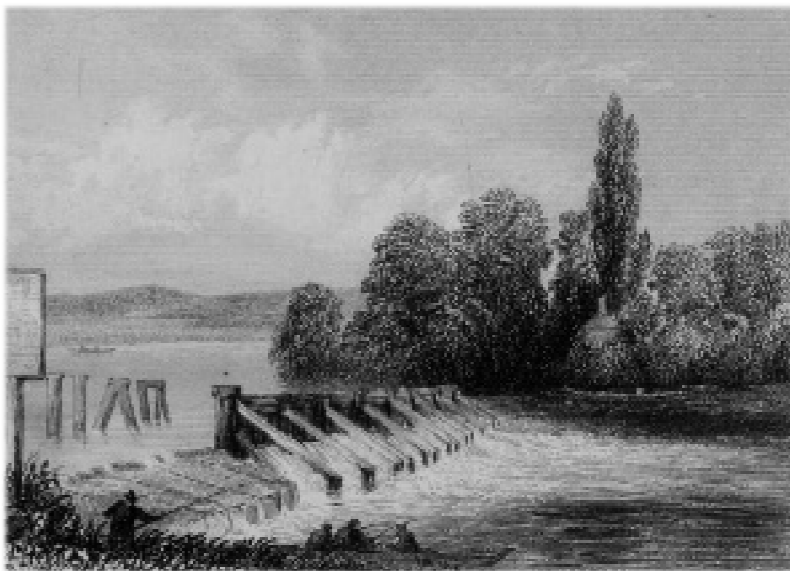
Besides, monologues in Russian in that tracks were taken from great movies Devil's Advocate with Al Pacino & Revolver by Guy Ritchie.

As someone who has had the chance to listen to nearly all of your releases, I was struck by a certain amount of similarity by some of the tracks on 'Celestial Burials' and your debut 'The Way to Built Your Future'. Would you mind explaining the matter a bit?

Absurd:

Hmm, it's just recorded how an inspiration came... I don't see similarities; in my opinion these albums are totally different.

Igor:



May be there are some reminiscences, but those are not re-arranges, but another point of view on conception of our sound. First album was very minimalistic & dry. Then we decided to do more "variable" music. Not just sludge or drone or something else. We wanted to make a fusion between genres & conceptions. So, some ideas that were born in the beginning have found their development in newer stuff...

Who was responsible for the design of the latest two releases? Was it been done in a collaboration with your label Turbinicarpus or was it the label that had a major (sole?) impact? How important is the design for you?

Igor:

Design for all releases was made by myself. I like to do some interesting things with various materials. I think it is very important to make an interesting design today, because in the age when everyone listen to mp3 and flac on computers and ipods, people buy CDs only for collections; more attractive package – more buyers. Certainly, music on those CDs should be interesting too, but hand-made design is play a big role today. But Andrew, owner of Turbinicarpus, make great design for all CDs that he take on his label. I like his point of view on many things. Not only for music or design. He is a great person, you know.

The last two releases do not have 'real' cover artworks. The releases appear in a crafted kind of way, but lack the essential 'identification' mark. How would you respond to this?

Absurd:

Man, you are paying too much attention on that question. It's just a design, we made it to interest listeners and because it was interesting experience for us – to make something unusual and nice. That's all. We didn't put any additional messages to those designs)

Igor:

Yes, it's just a design; neither more, nor less. Better listen to the music.

You use field-recordings for your albums and I wonder how you record them. Do you sit down in a café and place the recorder on a table, do you walk around in a city while carrying a microphone or is it been done by you? What role do these have in your art; compared with the music you play on the instruments? Are they some sort of counterpoint?

Absurd:

Hah, yes, Igor is a monster of field recordings))) He'll tell you about his journeys over the cemeteries)))

Igor:

We often use field recordings to reach certain atmosphere in our tracks. Yes, I have two dictaphones, which are always with me. I record everything: cicadas on the cemeteries, peoples in café, sounds of nature, concerts and soundchecks on various bands, etc. The more unique and unusual record is, the more it has value. Than I put all of them into my laptop & sort by similarities, genres, quality and types. I have a huge storage now and when we need to create some kind of atmospheres, I scan my storage for suitable recordings.

Your music tends to be mostly instrumental. Samples do appear now and then, but nothing even close to a longer passage of lyrics or the sort. Why do you avoid this aspect and focus on the instruments instead? Is there a chance this might change in the future?

Absurd:

Instrumental music is an ideal poetry. We play instrumental music because with instruments you can transmit much more emotions and soul excitements than with a vocal. When listen to the instrumental music everyone draw in his mind own images, own films. Besides, our music is close to soundtracks. May be for Jarmusch, Lynch or Cronenberg movies. So, vocalize is superfluous here.

Igor:

Because of words. There are emotions and experiences that no one can express with the words. Humanity is too pure in comparison with the nature, so people don't know all words to explain exact meaning of many psychological and emotional practices and conditions. But music does. Music can reach the farthest corners of your mind. So I don't think we shall use a vocalist in or tracks and make a songs. But... Everything is possible. If it will happen, it will be the most anguish songs in the world.

In the black metal scene, Eastern European music tends to get associated with the NS-ideology. From your perspective, what are reasons this kind of ideology receives such an amount of support in this region?

Igor:

Hah, I don't know. I don't listen to black metal at all, and I don't even know what is NS-ideology. Sorry but I hate politics, ideologies, trends, religions and so on. My only faith is in my soul, my only god is nature, my only ideology is music.

Absurd:

I'm out of politic and ideologies too. And we don't classify our music as just metal or just ambient, or something else. We don't care about this. Every person of any ideology, religion and racial accessory can listen and feel. Music is universal language, that everyone understand, if listen to.

Do you have some plans for new music already?

Absurd:

Yes, there are a lot of plans, we will make music during all lives, any time of year and days.

Igor:

Now we have already record material for new release. 4th album will be very silent. It will be the most ambient & meditative work - not like those we've made before. It will be like "Miasmah" label releases - much field recordings & lazy noir guitar. Besides, there will be the first track with our new member Lilly on woodwinds.

How can fans or other persons get in touch with you? Do you have some sites in the Internet?

Igor:

<http://gamardahfungus.bandcamp.com/>
<http://www.myspace.com/gamardahfungus>
<http://soundcloud.com/gamardahfungus>
<http://www.last.fm/music/Gamardah+Fungus>

Absurd:

May be in a future there will be a personal site. We think about it.

Some closing comments if you like.

Absurd:

I wanna create a beauty! Peace, man!

Igor:

Listen to music, respect, protect & love each other, grow yourself a person. Life is too short – appreciate every moment!

Gamardah Fungus – Celestial Funerals

(Ukraine; Ambient, Funeral Doom, Throat Singing, Experimental)

5 Tracks (CDr – Turbinicarpus Records) -_-_- (44:29)

<http://www.turbinicarpus.net.ua/>, <http://www.myspace.com/gamardahfungus>

Those who have followed this magazine a bit, might remember the Ukrainian band 'Gamardah Fungus' from an earlier edition. Their output 'Two Hemispheres, Two Worlds' had been discussed in a review and the dualistic nature of their music had been 'exposed' in it. Well, even though the band did not merely copy their style for this output, it is nevertheless a somewhat constant aspect of their art. In case someone takes a spin of this release, then this person will face two contrasts. Metal on the one and ambient on the other. Add a certain tendency to experiment, then you will get an idea of the general attitude and direction of the music.

There are generally no vocals, there are only some rare samples and at times there are even no drums. Constant are the guitar parts, the ambient segments, the separation of the ideas – first the calm and then the aggressive (metal) one – and the atmospheric nature of the music. It may be fair to say that the music has become a bit predictable, but it is still able to create a certain amount of fascination. Everything meanders along in a calm fashion, without much of a variation in tempo and style; this would be true of the ambient as well of the metal part. It should not surprise then, that the band chose to use the terminology 'funeral doom' as one element to describe their art. Here a very basic version is provided to the listener, which uses a minimalist kind of play. Repetitive, with little variation and at times even with some distortion or noise effects. On the one hand, something cheering and on the other some dark or depressing part. 'Atlantica' for instance, opens with the sound of waves crashing on the shore, while then the play of normal guitars adds some sense of melody to it all. A harmony is established, a scenery set. In some respect the music gives the impression of an outro, something with the attempt to lure the listener away from the concept, then actually demanding the full attention of this person. This changes once the guitars turn in. In the background a monotonous motive is played by the drums, while the guitars do not offer more than a motive first, a solo like one creates a counterpoint to the minimalism of the overall arrangements. Their play are connection through some notes, but the latter might give the listener the idea of mocking the reduced play of the other through this kind of variation.

The exception from the rule:

Celestial Funerals (feat. Tenzin Sambu), the fourth track. It is without any metal guitars and consists instead of a slow melody of several guitars, which is varied over the course of several minutes and leads over to a surprisingly intense vocal performance. Yes, here some of the fascination of Asian folk music can be grasped and throat singing – without overtones though – can be experienced here. Some ambience hovers in the background, a drum adds a gentle rhythm to it all and once the voice enters all focus is set on it. Judging from the rhythms some kind of text is recited, due to the amount of repetition in the singing. This earthen sound is very hypnotic and a clear contrast to the general instrumentation of the Ukrainian band. Again the aspect of contrasts is used by the band, but here in a different interpretation. While guitars and the ambience – normally two different sides of a coin – coalesce in the first part of this track, in the second one only the drums are allowed to accompany the performance of Tenzin Sambu.

Compared with the previous recording the level of experimenting appears on a different level. The first three tracks continue in a fashion similar to what the band had done before, but the last two compositions prove that they are capable to create more than this. On an interesting side note, the title of this release takes up an issue of another band of a previous edition: the Austrian band 'As Vampiric Shades and Belial Winds'. Why? Well, on their still – yes, I am definitely not kidding – unreleased album – see issue no. eight – they used a reference similar to the one of the Ukrainians: Celestial funerals. Aside from this both of them have little in common.



At least they have some fresh and interesting stuff on this recording. Would it not be for this one composition, the quality and fascination would be considerably lower. Fans of funeral doom might want to give this release a try though, because seeing how a lot of bands from this genre proceed towards the ambient region, they might the music of this Ukrainian band interesting.

Note:

Limited to 60 copies, but the music is available as a free at the Internet Archive.

Interviews

Antim Graham

Hello ... I hope you are fine... how are times in Nepal?

Greetings. I'm doing absolutely fine, thank you and things back here isn't so bad.

Why don't you lay out some of the band's history? Who started it? When was it started? And why had it been started at all?

We first started playing as kids around the end of 2002. It was me [Parash Shakya, vocalist; note from the editor], my brother Pankaj (Guitarist) and Niraj (Keyboards) who were in the founding lineup of the band along with few good friends. I think it all just started for the heck of jamming as we had the rush of this new found "metal" music. But slowly we got into it seriously.

How difficult has it been, or still is, to find musicians, who would be willing or to have the proper skill to fill the ranks of your band? Are all band members from Nepal?

- It was always difficult I guess. When we started, I guess it was bit easier back then as we were just trying to get into the groove without much perception of what we actually would end up doing. But now I definitely believe it is/was quite hard to find someone who could actually meet the bars set by the band. But I guess I'm quite fortunate to have the best of the musicians in the scene in our band. And yes, all of them are full bred Nepalese.

Why don't you describe the place you live a bit? What is the culture and the music like? How does the town you live in look like?

I think, to the most parts of world, Nepal is quite synonym to snow clad mountains, forests and terrains and all the things from fantasy land. And it is true as well. Unfortunately, I myself haven't yet been to those parts of the country as it lies quite far from where we actually live. We live in the capital, Kathmandu and I think it is like most of the cities in the world. But within it, we do have some heritage sites which tourists love to visit. Old cities, palaces, and temples are among the many things that you can venture into, if you are here sometime.

The music however is quite different as the most part of the country indulge their ear buds into traditional folk music and then followed by various mainstream music genres. "Metal" sadly still remains a scarce breed.

'Antim Graham', does it have some sort of special meaning behind it? What language has it been taken from?

Antim Graham roughly translates into "The last day on earth before Armageddon" in Nepali or at least that's what we like to portray it as.

Speaking of language. Why are the lyrics in English and not in your native tongue; ignoring 'Pashu Samrajya' from 'The Ruin of Immortals' for a moment? From your perspective, how does music sung in Nepalese differ from one performed in English? Is there a chance to hear music with such a 'touch' in the future?

Well to be very honest, it is very, very difficult to write down lyrics in Nepali in the same descriptive manner that we can express ourselves in English. It was just a matter of being comfortable about your writing I suppose. Singing wise there is not much of a difference though. And yes, we are planning our new album in full Nepali, so you can have all the traditional "touch" that you want.

Again a bit of history: What made you start this band and what had your reasons been for playing such an 'extreme kind of music'? Why black metal? What does this genre offer you that you are unable to express otherwise?

Like I said earlier, the band started with light jams with friends with similar taste in music. It was rare for us to get any albums of extreme metal bands back then and suddenly there were few shops where we actually found some good cassettes. The new found sound was glorious to us as the likes of Deicide, Cradle of Filth, Lord Belial among few others and we wanted to play and sound like them. But as we got more into such music, we were always more drawn towards the chaos, ambience and darkness of Black Metal.

Our music/lyrics are based most of the times in the fantasy, medieval themes, dark forests, depression and sorrow among other things and I believe the right expression of such elements came out well with what we were playing.

In order to get a bit of an overview in terms of your discography, why don't you describe succinctly the style you play on each of your recordings?

Forever Winter (2004)

This was more of a melodic metal album with very slight elements of black metal.

Tales from the Darkened Woods (2005)

This was us getting more into the symphonic black metal arena.

In Thy Ambience Ov Malevolence (2008)

With this album we started playing more of black metal and more aggressive then what we usually write.

The Ruin Of Immortals (2009)

By this album, we wanted to play as extreme as it would get. We incorporated black metal with the elements of death metal and grindcore.

Putrefaction Eternity (2010)

This is by far one of the most extreme music we have played or anyone from our local underground for that matter. It still continues to get mixed reactions as it was meant to be an experimentation album. Very less of black metal and more of brutal death/grindcore elements.

The band was founded in 2004 and the first release had seen the light of day in the same year. How long did it take you to get the songs done and from today's perspective, are you still able to enjoy them?

It took us about a week or less to get a song done and ready back then. The perspective, definition and standard of music from then till now has definitely changed in a big way but yeah people still love our old songs and we do play them live still, so it is still fun.

If you have to name some sources of inspiration what bands would these be? Has this changed over the years? Are there albums which played and continue to be precious to you for one reason or another and that have accompanied you over all the years that Antim Graham is active?

- The inspiration for us has to be bands like Satyricon, Emperor, Cradle of Filth (old, until dusk era), Marduk, Gorgoroth, Naragaroth, Shape of Despair, Immortal, Dark Funeral and so on. We do tend to listen to albums like Satyricon – Dark medieval times/Nemesis Divina, Gorgoroth – Pentagram/ under the sign of hell, Immortal – Sons of Northern Darkness/ At the heart of winter, Emperor - IX Equilibrium along with some other bands like Deathspell Omega, Alcest, Nortt are spinning around.



'The Ruin of Immortals' seems to mark a step into a more aggressive and more death metal influenced era. Why did you choose to proceed on this path? Cradle of Filth – a major influence for the first recordings – started as a grindcore band and moved towards a black metal (inspired) one, while you seem to take the opposite direction.

Haha. Well we certainly didn't follow that suit like that. But I guess we just wanted to do something different rather than being a genre whore. The Ruin of Immortals and even more Putrefaction Eternity has death/grind elements but that doesn't mean we are now a death/grind band. And for the new album, we do go back to Black Metal.

It seems natural to ask, whether you have found your style already? Where do you see the band heading towards? Will it be more of the death metal and less of the keyboards, or is there a chance that you move back towards the early days of Antim Graham?

Like aforementioned, we definitely aren't heading towards being a death metal band. We are still very much a black metal band we will definitely go back to black metal roots. Maybe not as melo as early Antim Graham, but definitely black metal.

Did this shift had an impact on the song-writing? Was it easier to write tracks for the latest outputs than the early ones? It would be interesting to know, whether the change in direction had an impact on how the music was composed? Are those responsible for it in the early days also continue to do so now?

It certainly was a challenge for most of us since we tried something completely different. From guitars to vocals to drums and everything, it was a different dimension all together. Music writing was very tough at times but I guess this did help the guys a lot for they got acquainted in doing something which was out of their comfort zone. Efficiency and output did certainly improve. In the end, it was all about trying to do something different than your usual stuffs and more or less we are glad we did this for a change.

Also the way you deal with the lyrics have changed: chorus/verse on the early, some story like thing now. Do you still try to focus on the rhythms and the dynamics or is the expressing on your latest recordings more in a free style in which you do not bother yourself with a too strict timing any more?

For the last two records that we have done, we tried to vary vocal patterns from what we usually did before and the whole music and lyric concept was different too. I have done almost all the lyrics/concept writing for the band but for the new album which we are now working on, however might be slightly different since the lyrics and concept is being done by someone else. And it will be different. The specifics of the differentiation would come once we are through with it.

How did your fan base respond to the change in style? What about the feedback on your music from a broader and more general perspective?

It was a mixed reaction and it was fair I think because the whole lot of fans that we have are used to the melodic stuffs that we usually write and it was sort of a rude awakening to have all the melodies almost vanished and just extreme music coming through. I think they preferred melodic version of us more. But there were also many who actually appreciated the effort. All in all, as a musician, the change was important and most of them did agree.

What are your reasons for using an inverted cross in the 'logo' on your first recordings, while the latest ones do not seem to have it any more? Does Christianity play a role in your sociocultural hemisphere or was it merely used as a, because black metal bands 'need' to have this sort of thing? Furthermore, judging from the pictures there seems to be some level of indecision whether corpse paint is still appropriate.

No, Christianity or any other religion was never an issue as such. The one with the inverted cross was our old logo and we just wanted to put it as against all religion in general and like you've said, it is an extreme cliché in the black metal bands, so i guess it was even more easier to generalize. And the theme and lyrics were likewise. But now our perspective has changed from once arrogant young revolting minds and hence the new logo. We just want to have fun with all those corpse paint and fake blood stuffs, nothing to do what early black metal bands did.

Why do you use Western films as a source for inspiration – 300? What about local mythology and history? Would such aspects not add an additional fascination to your band?

We write about majority of our songs in fantasies and stories and myths as such. It really doesn't matter if it's local or foreign as long as we think that it's interesting. And the song 300 represents the events of that final war, not the movie but of the actual event. But we did use the movie cut out just because it was more definitive that way for the start.

Something I tend to ask bands from small scene in general is the impact local culture has on their music. Why is there the tendency to follow the Western trend of crafting music and a general lack of reference to the band's own cultural sphere? Why do your albums have no traditional Nepalese instruments for instance?

I do agree with your statement. Almost all the bands (including us) have major western influence on our playing. But I think this happens because firstly we are playing a borrowed music. Hence the major chunk of influences from the west is very apparent. And secondly, when we talk about traditional musical instrument here, it takes a whole lot of time before you finally get to a level of maturity or at least somewhere near it to actually infuse such elements in black metal, a borrowed music from the western worlds, and make it sound like something original.

We have used a traditional flute for our 2nd album Tales From the Darkened Woods and our new album will see the induction of our local instruments.

What about live concerts? Did you have had a chance to play on stage already? How large have the crowds been and have you been able to play outside of your home country as well?

Yes. We have been around for as long as around 8 years now and we have managed many live gigs. And we do have gigs all round the year, so it isn't a problem really. In fact we have one of the best metal scenes in the whole of south Asia.

We recently played in Deccan Rock Fest in India where bands like Innerguilt, Funeral In Heaven, Nervercell played and was headlined by Polish death metal juggernaut DECAPITATED. We also had the honor to share the stage with the mighty VADER here in Kathmandu recently. The crowds here that turn up vary from 600 to 4000.

2010 has seen the release of 'Putrefaction Eternity' and is it possible to write a bit about a future release already? Do you have some plans regarding a new output?

We are working on the new album as we speak. This album would be in full Nepali and with traditional instruments. We go back to Black Metal roots with this new project.

Why is your music not found on a Western label? Why have you not done a split with a band from 'some country' so far?

We released our 4th album "The Ruin of Immortals" from a Japanese independent label, Asian Rock Rising. And our 5th album "Putrefaction Eternity" has been looked after in the US by GORE-KHA Records. We actually had some talks with few labels but things somehow phased out. But we are working on few good ones and things should be fine soon enough. We might also do a split with our very good friends "Funeral In Heaven" from Sri Lanka.

Do you have beer in Nepal? If not, what would be a good booze from your region?

Of course we have all kinds of liquors here. But I think local booze (rakshi) should do the trick.

Does the Nepalese cuisine have hot and spicy dishes? Or how would you describe your local gastronomy?

Lets just keep it this way, if you aren't a person who can intake some serious spices, you might just die hungry in Nepal. It's spicy, salty, chilly all the way.

Where can someone buy your music from? Is there a distro or label that carries the stuff?

Nothing as specific as such but you can always contact the band itself or just email the local underground music label KtmRecords/KtmRocks for any additional info/ cd's/ merchandises(if a band has one)

What would be the best way to get in touch with you?

<http://www.facebook.com/parash.shakya>

<http://www.facebook.com/grahan.antim>

Or our local label

www.facebook.com/ktmrocks.page

These should do it.

Auaesuve

Why don't you start with some explanation on your band name? The all-knowing Google seems to be unable to come up with something meaningful to explain it. Did you come up with it naturally when you started the band?

Originally, Auaesuve was the title I was going to use for a series of short-stories. I came up with the combination of letters through meditation and free-writing, no doubt it came about due to the influence of esoteric and occult readings I was doing at that time.

Actually, what had been the reasons to found it anyway? Did you have some bands or releases, which sparked you're interested in creating music?

Well, I was in a band when I was around 14 yrs of age called Languid Aeon; it was mostly a jam band at the time. We played around with Doom and Drone metal ideas, and everything we produced was completely improvised around that. We had two albums-worth of material, but we never released them to any label, instead we kept it to ourselves. When we all started moving away from each other the band broke up, and that's when I decided to experiment by myself, and eventually came up with Auaesuve. Before any of this I already had a huge passion for music, so the spark was already there for awhile.

Interestingly, Auaesuve originally started as an ambient band, while it progressed over drone/doom over neofolk/doom to the current funeral doom style. Firstly, why did you not start a band that would cover each of these genres and secondly, what made you shift the music?

I was still 14 when I came up with Auaesuve, and for awhile I didn't have a concrete style that I wanted to stick to. It's still a problem I have today, where it's difficult to stay consistent at one genre of music or one definite atmosphere, I keep changing. If there were another person working with me under Auaesuve, there would be less changing.

Considering that your music has changed quite significantly over the years, why don't you write a few lines on each of your outputs?



Deceased Earth (2006)

It's the beginning of it all. Deceased Earth started out as a short-story that I pulled out while listening to Tyranny's album Tides of Awakening, eventually I figured it would be a good place to start the project. I broke the story, or vision rather, into 3 parts, and improvised what I would eventually call "Funeral Ambient" around it. I haven't listened to this in a long time, it's now long gone, and I doubt anyone still has this anywhere.

Languished Aeons in Ruins (2007)

Auaesuve's debut release. This one is almost entirely improvised, the only exception being some of "Eternal Wandering into Outlandish Aeons" and the first half of "Funereal Passage into Dead Sea". That being said, most of the album was made through a strictly meditative state, and because of that can be pretty abstract in concept, although I try to give a general canvas for the listener through the song-titles. That last song was very emotional for me actually, it was rare for me to make music with emotion at this point. I took the concept of Funeral Ambient from my Deceased Earth work, and expanded on it with more variation and more detailed scenery. I guess you can say the experience will be good if you listen while in trance, when you're mind is not very preoccupied and busy. It also helps to enjoy ambient and drone with raw recording quality.

Obelisk (2007)

Not among my favorite of my work mostly because of the memories, Obelisk is a Droning / Funeral Ambient EP made through a lot of frustration. Very harsh, and very distorted, Obelisk grew from a more primal and negative place rather than from the idea of transcendence through meditation and imagination. This was the first time I actually used my guitar a lot as well. The concept of the "obelisk" is very abstract, and although it did stem from a poem I wrote, the music ended up reflecting my disgust and hatred for certain things more than anything else.

Akashic Sands of the Past (2009)

This is where I really start changing as a person, this one was made through a very bad time in my life. Although I did not listen to a whole lot of neofolk during this time, I ended up making music close to it. Akashic Sands of the Past is a rather lengthy story I wrote before making this demo, and again it's a case where emotions start overriding mediation and abstract themes, it might be the most human release I have so far.

Displaced and Uncharted (2010)

This is what I feel to be the natural progression from "Akashic Sands..." now that I listen to it again. There's a lot of hurt in this album, a lot of more natural and human qualities than my earlier ideas. This is also my first straight Funeral Doom Metal album with minimal ambient or anything else. There's a lot of venting on this album, and it might be the first release I made purely for emotional release. I think I would be dead without this album.

Are you still able to enjoy your early demos or do these contain too many 'flaws' which you would like to see changed in hindsight?

There are a ton of flaws that I can point out about each release if I listen to them now, but at the same time I still highly enjoy each release for different reasons. For me, each release of mine is a recorded piece of my own history and the evolution of the person I am and what I've been through, and they were all necessary.

Following this question in some sense, what has changed over the years when it comes to composing, arranging, producing music? How would you describe the development Auaesuve has taken?

Auaesuve is a lot less about improvisation now, and also, since I literally grew up with Auaesuve, it's definitely at a much more mature state. I've had a lot of the same equipment through each release, so not a lot changed as to how I technically produce or compose the music, but I would say I'm at a much more mature point when it comes to thinking the music up in the first place, it comes from a much more personal place than before.

What are the core essences of your oeuvre and, from your perspective, what distinguished Auaesuve from other bands?

Honestly, I don't listen to enough doom metal now as I use to, so I don't know what's out there and how I distinguish myself from them, but I do know that it's always been a point of mine to not trend-hop, and to make music that I want to in whatever form I want to make it in without caring about who it sounds like or things like that. If there's anything that set me a part, it would be how much I've change as a person and how much I've brought that into my music. But, musically, I'm not sure since I don't listen to a lot of current doom metal bands now.

Did you use a professional studio for your art or how have you dealt with this aspect?

I've never made music in a professional studio exactly, but when Auaesuve was younger I had a room in the house I lived in at the time devoted to music and art. It's actually been an issue for me now, I would have released more music by now if I had a good place to record it, and good enough equipment.

When it comes to the song-writing, then how do you approach it? Is it a riff, a certain atmosphere, a sample or what marks the starting point?

It's a pretty arduous process for me...the reason why meditation was and is important for me is because my mind is not very organized by itself, and it can be very frustrating. But, if I were to simplify the process, there are two main ways I make music. 1 is through total improvisation using meditation as the basis, as can be seen on my first few releases, and the 2nd I would start from a very simple melody, usually very short, and progress the song through that main melody. The starting melody would be made based on what feeling I want to convey.

Does the music of Auaesuve need a certain amount of heaviness in order to work? How do you deal with it and is this an aspect you have in the back of your head once you start composing music?

The amount of overall bass in each song I make is usually at a more dominating level than the rest, so I suppose it's something I've always felt the need to do subconsciously. But it's not something I have to do in order for it to work I think.

How important the following aspects to you:

- **consistency in the atmosphere**

Very important, and is unfortunately the reason I have so many dead-end side-projects.

- **samples**

Simple atmospheric samples, like waves on the ocean for example, are very important to me. Each song is an element, and for me it happens to mostly be water, and I try to convey that when I can. Wind is important as well.

- **interludes**

For Displaced and Uncharted it was a bit important to have one in each song, I think they're very important especially in a genre of music where the tempo is so slow and variation might be needed. It's not very important, or even existent to me, when dealing with Drone or Ambient.

- **noise elements**

Very important, like elemental samples, it helps keep the song feeling alive and organic as oppose to just a song. It can add that "stream of consciousness" feel that one may feel with ambient or drone to other genres of music, which is what I've been seeing a lot of in some black metal bands nowadays.

Don't you think that music such as yours is interesting to listen to, but when it comes to delivering a message then it is hard to penetrate the surface, because the limitation as well as the distortion – of the vocals for instance – prevent this in certain limits. Your response?

I try to keep the message conveyed through the music itself rather than what I say in the song. I feel most of my lyrics can add to the overall image well, but at the end of the day it's how the song moves you when you actually feel any message anyway, I don't know if my way is effective but I do know I put a lot of myself in everything I do, and I think some people get that. And, I do think my music is interesting, but I may be a bit biased on that one, heh.

Would your music be a colour or some kind of picture, then how would this look like?

My music usually derives from a kind of picture in the first place, each song would look different, but if I were to describe Auaesuve as a whole it would be too big to describe. The whole idea of which Auaesuve started was to express many things I would see in meditation which included stories I would write, strange dreams I would have, that sort of thing mixed with a little bit of the occult. As for a color, I would say purple, black, and grey would be domination colors throughout the Auaesuve discography.

Can funeral doom be cheerful? Is it possible to craft music that would lift up the spirit?

Yes! It really can be. It's funny that you ask this, I'm actually experimenting with this idea for the next Auaesuve release. I already attempted this with the first song on Displaced and Uncharted actually. I wouldn't say Funeral doom can be cheerful exactly, but it can definitely lift the spirit through positive, or at least not very negative, channels. I learned this awhile ago while listening to Skepticism. I don't know if it's their intention, but some of their songs don't speak to me in a negative way at all, actually most of their music seems to also spawn from deep meditation, and has lifted my spirit many times. This doesn't apply to a lot of bands, but it's definitely possible.

What kind of album do you like to turn to now and then? Are there some that had a profound impact on you and which made you decide to create a particular type of music?

I actually listen to a lot of music off soundtracks, especially recently. Composers such as Jeremy Soule, Hanz Zimmer, Harry Gregson Williams, Nobuo Uematsu, etc... Though, I don't feel much influenced to make music like that. On the other hand, some bands I've been listening to a lot as well have been Skepticism and Thergothon of course, Jesu, Tyranny, Dolorian, Esoteric, Anathema, Buckethead, Catacombs occasionally, there's others bands I'm forgetting probably. Besides that, I've been listening to a lot of Finnish ambient from the good ol' Aural Hypnox label, mostly Aeoga and Arktau Eos. It would be hard to say that none of that has influenced me.

Poetry and funeral doom... is this a fruitful combination? Are there some poems you would like to see interpreted by a funeral or a black doom band?

This reminds me of one of Tyranny's songs, Drown. A part of a rather famous poem was used for some of the lyrics, I thought it fit very well. I don't think there are any poems that come to mind that I would like to see turned into a song, but definitely a few stories. It would be interesting to see someone's interpretation of Celephais by Lovecraft into a song, it's worded very beautifully and I'm sure it can result in an equally majestic doom metal song.

The black metal scene has seen a certain rise of depressive black metal and also ambient black metal plays a significant role today. Funeral doom band tend to pop-up again and again as well. How do you see this development? Could it be merely a trend that bands like to follow or is it also a reflection of the bleakness of our days – the loss of illusions, impending natural disasters, and economic crisis?

It can be both. It would be legitimate to say that we're living in times that spawn negativity in people very easily, and those people can also very easily take that negativity into the things they do such as music. On the other hand there are a lot of people who do things because they feel a belonging to the scene, or to whatever impresses them about it, so they try to emulate it without having as clear a purpose than the people they try to emulate. It applies to more than just music of course, there's always going to be leaders and followers. Its human nature I guess.

A glance over the lyrics of your latest output 'Displaced and Uncharted' reveals a rather free and story-like way of expressing these.

Displaced and Uncharted was probably the only release I made where there was no abstract theme, but an emotional purpose for each song. That being said, the process was also almost exactly the same to my very first demo Deceased Earth, in that all of the lyrics are broken up pieces to one story or vision. Except it's a lot more based on growing up and my feelings on things, basically a reflection. Songs like "A Benighted Era of the New Age" definitely show that I have some disgust towards certain things going on now, including some things we see in certain music scenes right now, but I think I ranted enough about it in that song alone.

How have the responses on your art been so far?

Surprisingly positive, although not completely of course which is going to happen either way. I'm just happy people like what I do at all; I never expect a positive review, even if I think I've made a masterpiece, hah.

The Metal Archives lists the following bands as side-projects of yours:

Raeven, Languish, Fumerealien, Dweller on the Threshold, The Aeonic Order of Vacuity, Depthen, and Asgaya Gigagae.

Why don't you lay out their concept and their current status a bit?

Oh boy...well let's see:

Raeven:

I made one demo called Pernicious Rising in 2006 I think, it was lovecraftian Funeral Doom Ambient. It can easily be found on the internet, it was originally released on some now-dead internet label at the time.

Languish:

Released a self-titled Dark ambient album on Prime Unit records in 2008 I think, Heathen Harvest gave it a positive review. It was inspired by heartbreak, and I regret using a band-name as good as Languish for a one-off project. I may revive it for something else just because I really like the name.

Fumerealien:

Released a self-titled demo in 2007, it featured a rather bipolar mix of ambient, noise, and tortured doom metal. It can also be easily found on the internet, though it wasn't released on any label, I gave it away myself.

Dweller on the Threshold:

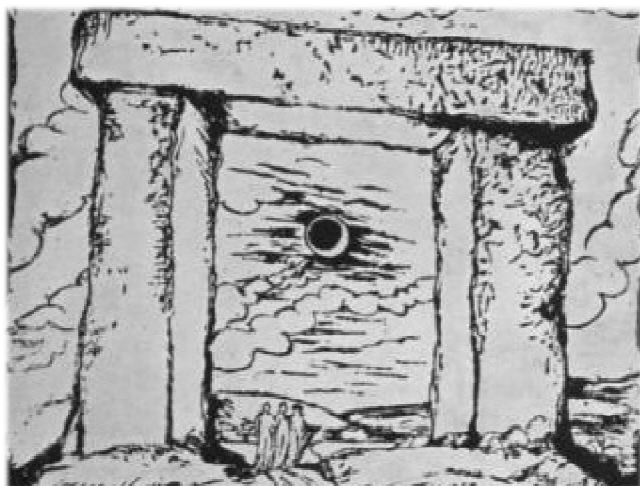
Released a self-titled album in 2009 (I think) on Singularity Publishing, it featured one of the first times I would use a drum machine for music. It was another bi-polar mix of music as usual, but this time focused much more on the doom metal than the ambient, and features a very tortured and distorted as all-hell drone song featuring a catholic church's hymn in the back ground for good measure.

The Aeonic Order of Vacuity:

Probably my favourite side-project, I actually have 2 releases for this one. The debut demo entitled Nether was released in 2009 on the FunerART label. This is one of the best things I've made, in my humble opinion, and features rather mechanical sounding funeral doom with a less bi-polar mix of sounds and influence. The demo after, released for free, entitled The Aetherael, is a less consistent piece of work including a black/doom song channelled from some very dark place, a few funeral doom songs focusing more on that ether I find myself in through meditation, and a interesting black metal experiment somewhere in the middle. That one was released in 2010.

Depthen:

A very old side project, the debut album Sunken Shades was released in 2008 on Singularity publishing. This is, in essence, the lost Auaesuve demo. It really should have been released under Auaesuve, but at the time I felt it wasn't consistent with what I was doing so it had to be sectioned off as a new entity. I regret releasing any of these demos and albums outside of Auaesuve now. Sunken Shades was a very spiritual demo, made with the concept with crossing-over the ocean of the dying into the next life that awaits us. As usual, the music was made under the styles of ritual ambient, drone, and funeral doom metal.



Asgaya Gigagae:

Probably the only side-project that should be a side-project on this list, I released the debut for this one entitled The Decline before the Dream on an internet label called The Plague of Dreaming in 2008 or 2009. The music on this one is purely ambient for the purpose of restoration and meditation, a sort of self-hypnosis for me as well. Probably the only strictly positive album I've made.

I don't have any intention on making music for any of these projects anytime soon. There are only 2 active projects that I'm working on, Auaesuve, and a more post-rock driven band called Aevian.

Is it not difficult to deal with so many projects? Is it not challenging to develop a clear identity in terms of the music and style?

The reason I made all of these side-projects was because I would make an album, and then later figure that it doesn't fit whatever I was doing with Auaesuve at the time, so I would release it under a more fitting name. So I never had any intention on making more than one release, but I do highly regret all of that now.

What about some new music? Do you have some songs/albums ready for release?

I've made quite a lot of music, but I've only recently started on recording the songs I have done for the new Auaesuve album. Unfortunately, due to various circumstances, I've lost a lot of my old equipment and I have not been able to record anything for a long time. It's been a frustrating few years for me musically, but I'm starting to get back on track.

Currently, is there music available from you? Are there still labels, which carry your stuff? What about your early outputs, is there a chance to see a re-release of them?

I know solitudestore, psychedoomelic, and Boyanov-gimn/Gris records sell Displaced and Uncharted, as for the rest I'm not sure. Singularity Publishing still sells what I made for Depthen and Dweller on the Threshold, other than that you can check the labels I've mentioned in the answer about my side-projects. I know pretty much everything I've released can be found on the internet, alternatively. I've been working on a totally re-done version of Akashic Sands of the Past as well, so that will see release once I'm done with that.

How can people contact you? Do you have some Internet sites, which someone can turn to?

You have a good chance of finding me on MySpace at:

<http://www.myspace.com/auaesuve>

If you want to email me you can find me at:

desolateaddress @ yahoo . com

Some word to close this interview?

Thank you very much for your interest in Auaesuve, it's truly been a delight answering these questions, I hope you have a great day.

S.o.M.

(originally done for the Circle of Destruction magazine)

<http://circleofdestruction.net/>

Greetings Tomo, please introduce your band. Where are you from? Tell us about your motivation to start it. When was it formed and how came all into existence?

Hi oneyoudontknow, thank you very much for the opportunity to present our band!

We are S.o.M. ethno doom band from Croatia.

S.o.M. and whole idea around it actually started decades ago in my subconscious and I wasn't really aware of it until these days :-)

As a teenager I enjoyed listening to Black Sabbath and other hard bands (although at the time there were not many heavy bands available in this region, they were actually hard-rock bands). At the same time I enjoyed listening to some tapes with traditional music from Medjmurje, northern part of Croatia. Of course, noone knew I was listening to those tapes, teenager like me wouldn't compromise his heavy-metal status :-)

Second step in this proces was the beginnig of 90's when ethno-movement in world and Croatia triggered the rediscovery my interest in ethno music.

Through these years heavier and faster bands passed through my ears, but eventually I lost joy of listening to them. Last step was when my friend Damjan, our guitarist, borrowed me some doom CDs - that was the trigger that initiated the start of the "band". At the beggining it was just a sleeping-room project of recording songs from Medjmurje in a doomy way - I hear those songs as pure doom, both in lyrics and vocal melodies, so it came natural to me to combine two favorites.

Home project lasted for about a year when Matija, former bassist joined me and we started rehearsals along with some boring rhythm machine. Then Zoran came to play drums and soon we had our first gig in Feb. 2007 (many thanks to band "Good Day to Die" for invitation without even hearing us live ever before!)

Please enlighten us on your influences; music, literature or art in general.

I enjoy slow, romantic, melancholic, still music that relaxes me but also it has to have some elements in it that raises adrenaline and gives me power and inspiration, which I find in many doom and traditional songs. I actually don't read very much, I don't have enough time for it and I mostly read spiritual and self improving books. I enjoy strange paintings or photos and from time to time I take a look at the movie or two.

How have been the responses (fans, labels, magazines) been over the years?

We have a small circle of doom(y) bands and fans that visit such gigs. Since we are very young band most of labels did not have an opportunity to hear our work, the few of them who heard are not interested yet.

In terms of the song-writing, how does this take place in S.o.M.?

The process is very simple - when we hear a "right" traditional song with vocal melody that sound doom in our ears, we bring it to rehearsal and start working on it. Usually every member takes care for its instrument and choose how to play the song. We sign our songs and arrangements with "S.o.M." and not with author's name because noone can measure who had a greater or smaller role in creating the song - sometimes it's enough to play two notes and change the whole song making it "the song".

Your band name is an abbreviation for Sons of Medjimurje, hence there is the questions what "Medjimurje" actually is. Enlighten us on this topic. Please explain your reasons to choose folk influences from this region, what makes these so special and how does the music from this region sound; in comparison to other regions of your country?

Medjimurje is a region in northern part of Croatia. For me, it's known for most beautiful songs in Universe. They are so melancholic, romantic, sad, even if they sound like happy ones I still can feel a touch of sadness in them, they have fantastic lyrics, metrics and wonderful vocal parts. It also has a rather specific scale. Songs we take for arrangement have to be slow (or we make them slow) and sad and Medjimurje has plenty of them because that region was (and still is between Balkans and EU :-)) on a border between West and East, many wars and battles were held, men were forced to go to armies and wars, ... its history is very hard and sad. I know there are many other borderline regions with sad and horror history, but they don't have such songs :-)



I am not really that good in musicology so I can not stand for that fact, but I did not hear nothing alike in music from other parts of Croatia. One part of the world has songs that gives me similar feeling when I listen to them, and those are songs from Russia. This should not be much of a surprise - men from Medjimurje were taken to war and driven to Russia, so it not unlikely that songs from Medjimurje had some influence to Russian traditional music and viceversa. There are a number of songs that sing about battles and life in Russia, far away from home. The reason for feeling this region as an inspiration could possibly be explained genetically - although I don't know much about my ancestors there, my surname brings some associations on that region and I know they lived somewhere near that region in history.

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How does the folk influence your music and on which facets could someone pinpoint it?

Folk songs are the basics of our inspiration. I personally listen constantly to folk songs and look for great songs; further, our guitarist Damjan, vocalist Vedrana and I are deeply involved in cooperation with Dunja Knebl, Croatian ethno-legend and folk-encyclopedia :-). Her personal mission is to bring forgotten songs back to light and thus we are at the very source to fulfill our mission, to connect younger and older generations with music. Dunja supports us from the beginning of our friendship and she knows what kind of songs we are looking for so she often locates them for us.

Are there folk bands from "Medjimurje" you would like to recommend?

I understand you ask for traditional folk bands? I'm not really that into the facts so I can not suggest any name, but if some of your readers are interested in hearing original traditional songs in a way they were sung in history, sung by mostly amateur singers, usually without any instrument, they can click on this link and download some songs.

(<http://tinyurl.com/3vec27>)

or

([http://www.medjimurska-](http://www.medjimurska-popevka.hr/new/index.php?option=com_content&task=section&id=5&Itemid=28)

[popevka.hr/new/index.php?option=com_content&task=section&id=5&Itemid=28](http://www.medjimurska-popevka.hr/new/index.php?option=com_content&task=section&id=5&Itemid=28))

Pure hardcore ethno :-)

I will take a freedom and suggest song #23 "Mura, Mura", one of my personal favorite songs ever, which S.o.M. already arranged and published on our demo CD.

Why do you use female vocals instead of male ones? How does the fact that you have two female vocalists now influence your music?

This is part of philosophy of band to connect contrasts - hard and heavy instruments vs gentle voices. Growl vs clean vocal. Male - female. Old songs - young spectators. New arrangements - old spectators. Minus - plus. Everything should be in contrast to be in its full, so the band.

Then, I believe ladies can transfer emotions of the song better than men.

And at last - there is more joy in watching and listening to beautiful young ladies at the front of the band than an old fart like me :-)

The music on your first demo is quite hypnotic in style, due to the slow tempo and the vocals of Lea. Do you plan to proceed this pathway or are there other styles you want to explore on your next releases?

This should be also our main style in the future, although we don't make any plans on what to do to keep or change the style and why, we just follow our feelings. Now that some members are changed and due to the fact we all grow and change as people - that will necessarily lead to temporary "diversions" in style. All members are very creative and that's real fortune for S.o.M. which would probably become a bit boring should it depend on just one author. Every member will bring its own vision and feeling in arrangements and I hope this will give our songs new and rich dimension, while keeping main style.

What do your lyrics deal with?

As expected, lyrics written by people living in such hard circumstances can not be nothing but sad and melancholic and we take alike. Songs talk about wars, broken families, death, men taken to battles, women left behind, also about murders, love affairs, ... there are also black-humour songs, for example the one from our demo CD - "Sirota sam" (Alone in the world). It talks about girl whose father was drowned in river, her mother died, sisters left her or were taken away, brother was killed on Russian front. Yet, she worries most about the fact she doesn't have a boy although she's looking quite all right :-)

What language do you use and tell us the reasons for doing so? Has each language a different atmosphere?

We sing in Croatian since our songs are written in that language. We have a couple of songs with self written lyrics but also in Croatian because I don't think we can't express emotions in foreign language, and we can not express them in lyrics that would reflect the music, too. We sure will give a try to other languages as we plan to arrange songs from other parts of world, too. Hopefully we'll get the right feeling of those songs and succeed to transfer emotions to fans.

I don't think there is a rule of getting the atmosphere with this language or that - if the song is right and band can transfer it, then any language will do.

Have you played live with S.o.M. or are you planning to do so? How have the responses been?

We had some roughly 15 gigs, most doom-metal but some in unplugged-doom version, I believe quite good number for extreme style of music in small country such as Croatia. Responses are really impressive - there are basically two major types of comments: boring (which is understandable for people who do not listen to this type of music) and excellent. This really raise our ego and keeps us going further :-)

We'll have an important gig next week - we are supporting Romanian black-metal band Negura Bunget which will be our most important gig. Then we have a gig with two Croatian ethno legends - Afion and Kries. We are members of Ethno section of Croatian Musicians Union and that brought us to such event.

You also have a side-project. Please tell us about it and what differentiates it from S.o.M..

I have many ideas that does not really fit in my vision of S.o.M. yet I have a need to express them. That lead me to side-project under my personal name "Tomo" - it's mostly a kind of dark-ethno music (well, ethno again :-)), but you can also find short dark stories or noise-like game with instruments. Sound is more gentle, I often use synthesizer and acoustic instruments. There are also some songs that some called pop :-) And this is something I would not like to mess with S.o.M. :-) But, some ideas from that project are already transferred to S.o.M. like headline from debut CD - Tozno vreme, boj krvavi (Sad times, murderous combat). S.o.M. will introduce this song to fans in three concerts we will have in following weeks, and I think this is our heaviest song until now.

As an artist, how do you see the tendency to download music?

As an underground, extreme music artist I don't have problems with that :-) I am happy when people like our music, and since our fans are mostly young students I know they don't have much money for CDs so I am happy when they. Thus we put our demo CD for free download and I believe we will make the same with next CD.

Musicians don't earn much money by selling CDs, anyways, so download does not hurt them too much, it (maybe) hurts music industry. They have enough money, so I don't have to cry about their destiny. At the end, many fans still buy original CD if they really like it. I believe in legal online music download services and I hope this will be the future of selling music. As a musician you don't have to make dozens of songs to get an opportunity to sell them, yet you can earn some money, as a listener you don't have to buy whole CD if you like just one or two songs and still want to support your favorite musician.

What do you prefer? Exchanges via e-mail or sending letters to people abroad? Please explain.

I am a computer freak, long time computer user and I make for living as a computer expert. So, logically, I prefer e-mail and e-everything over anything written on paper. I almost forgot how to write down letters and my fingers hurt when I use a pencil :-). Every time carries its own, I love many traditional values, but I love using modern technique. I try to use what I think is the best for me and try not to care about what suits where.

As the scene is changing due to the rise of the internet, how do you see the metal scene in this changing environment? What does the term 'underground' mean to you?

Pure theory says underground is opposite to mainstream. You don't get heard on radio, you don't sign for major label, you play in small clubs, you are your own organizer and promoter, etc... To me personally 'underground' also means that I am allowed to make whatever I want, I compose, play and sing just for having fun and not money. If I have an inspiration I record a song or CD, if not - I don't. It's a way of presenting yourself to people in a way one thing how (s)he should be presented, not in a way industry thinks you should look and sound. Of course, that also means you are doomed to finance yourself on your own :-). Unless you get lucky and find a sponsor who likes you the way you are and does not press you to conform to industry standards.

If you should name a few good underground labels, which ones would they be?

Well, I am really not into it, I hardly know any fact about music and music industry, both underground and mainstream. I also don't care much about the facts and I try to forget them as soon as possible when I heard one :-). When I need to know something I ask my dear friends and members, there are so many young people today that know every fact about everything in music, and also there is Internet and I can easily find out anything what I think I have to know.

Which albums (metal/non-metal) do you see as essential?

Not mentioning any traditional music performer / album, for me there are several albums that have a heavy influence: Black Sabbath's first albums set the roots back in 70's. Then there are three ethno performers that influenced me in 90's - Dunja Knebl, Mojmir Novakovic (Legen, Kries) and Lidija Bajuk on "Ethno ambient live". And finally there were some albums that triggered the S.o.M. project several years ago - Cathedral: Forest Of Equilibrium, Corrupted: El Mundo Frio (which is still my own doom Bible), Yob: The Illusion Of Motion.

What other bands from Croatia should we give a try?

I think there are many, many good bands playing this kind of music, but I would like to suggest two doom bands we had several gigs with - Throm and (drama). Then there is great stoner band "Good day to die". They are all amongst our myspace top friends, as well as many other very good bands worth listening to.

How can people contact you? Where can they get your releases?

e-mail: somdoom@gmail.com

MSN: somdoom@hotmail.com

official page: <http://www.somdoom.com>

official myspace: <http://www.myspace.com/somdoom>

Unfortunately, our self-released demo CD "Ethno doom" is "sold" out (actually we gave away all copies), but it can be downloaded for free from our server:

<http://www.somdoom.com/content/view/67/28>

Due to demand of our friends and fans, we are considering reprint.

There is a compilation CD made by our friend Eugene Voron from "Boyanov Gimn" (Ukraine) named similar to our demo CD "Ethno doom", it's just an internationalized name of our demo CD - it contains 4 songs from our demo cd plus some of our older home-recordings.

This page contains all necessary info:

<http://boyanov-gimn.narod.ru/som-004.htm>

There are two CD-s with various artists where we are represented with two songs in acoustic arrangement:

Folk compilation #1 "New Dawn" by Boyanov Gimn (2008)

<http://www.somdoom.com/content/view/81/40>

This cd is available for free download.

and

2008 Compilation "Earthplugged" (Croatian world music for WOMEX)

<http://www.somdoom.com/content/view/93/40>

This CD is only promo and not available to public. It's the representation of Croatian ethno music for world's biggest ethno fair, Womex.

So, we believe S.o.M. is the world's only doom-metal band that officially represents the colours of its country music :-)

Final words, please.

I believe I wrote pretty enough words, maybe just a word or two to young bands: it seems to me that young bands are often (in my opinion) stuck with "technical problems" - is the equipment right, is my guitar good enough, is my playing technique good enough, is my amp loud enough ... I believe this is totally unimportant for the beginning. The only important thing in the start is - idea and the way you present the idea to public. Equipment will come later, as you travel. Spend your energy to *what* you want to present.

Krom / Gravehuffer

I hope you folks are alright ... that tornado had hit Joplin pretty hard.

Why don't you share your impressions of what had happened? I had two e-mails from Stan in the latest two editions of my magazine in which he told his story of what how the tornado affected his life.

Ritchie: For my part, it was the most horrifying experience I've ever been involved in. I am married with four kids, ages 8, 4, and at the time, 6 week old twins (all boys). We just finished KROM's band practice, via my garage, about 30 minutes before the tornado hit. I was upstairs with one of my twin boys when the sirens went off. We all went to the bathtub and then the phone rang. I got up to answer and it was my mother-in-law telling us to take shelter immediately. Before I could end our conversation, the lights turned a sickly brown color and then they went out. I still had Max in my hands. The wind started to roar as soon as Max & I got to the bathroom. My wife, Bianca and I held our kids and tried to cover as much of them as we could with our bodies. The tornado was upon us. The windows started popping, doors were slamming shut and the sound was so loud, you could feel it. Our ears were popping from the pressure. I thought to myself, "what is this going to feel like to die". We held the shower curtain closed as tightly as we could. It seemed to last for an eternity. It finally passed after several minutes. Since I was the only person wearing shoes, I got out of the tub to survey the damage. If we were in any other room in the house, we would've been severely injured or dead. There was glass embedded in the walls. Tables, chairs, clothing, kids toys, food, pictures, just all of our belongings thrown everywhere, inside and outside of the house. The first words out of my mouth were, "Bianca, our house is fucked". I walked to the front door, which was somehow still shut, opened it and realized the roof was gone above me. The first of many tears were shed as I looked out the front door to see what was left of our neighborhood. Little did I know how much worse it got nor how extensive the damage was to the entire town. We all came out unharmed physically only to find out our dog would eventually die from internal injuries. That's another story on it's own that involves the law so I can't talk about that. I could go on. Sorry it was so long winded.

Mike: We finished practice early, drove across town down 26th street. 10 minutes after getting home that tornado followed my path across town. James lived on 15th and mass. I live on 28th and mass. It went right between us. Most everything between our houses is gone. It took part of our roof and flooded the basement with 2 feet of water, but we are some of the lucky ones. A third of the town is gone. It takes a toll on you driving through it each day. There isn't an inch of ground that's the same after the storm. We saw the worst and best of people and the town really came together.



The pictures from Joplin were quite disturbing and distressing. You got the impression as if someone had dropped a bomb on the town ... a large one. Has this impression changed a bit since?

Mike: No, it looks more like a giant lawnmower mowed a path right through town. 1000's of trees gone. You can see the other side of town now.

Ritchie: The scar remains, but the wound has mostly be cleaned. The community and various volunteers, including my band mates, have been absolutely incredible. The rebuilding efforts are in full force now.

You lost the merchandise to the tornado, at least this is what Stan had written. Is there any chance to see some new stuff hits the surface soon? The cover artwork would look good on a vinyl disk.

Ritchie: Yes, we are getting ready to record an E.P. very soon. Next week actually. It will have 4 or 5 new songs on it. We would possibly entertain releasing it as a seven inch. That would indeed be cool.

Mike: Merch box was completely full of water, even soaked through the plastic wrap on the cd's. We lost all t-shirts, buttons and stickers and the last of the cd's. We would love to release some vinyl, kind of expensive though.

Let us talk a bit about your band now:

Why did you pick the name Krom for your band? Does it have a special meaning and did you ever listen to any of the other bands Krom; one also from the USA and two from Italy?

Mike: One day at practice we were thinking of band names and Larry blurted out "Krom" We all laughed cause we dig Conan, then later we heard CROM and they are great, but there wasn't any Kroms with a "k". Now there are a few more. We haven't heard the other Kroms. The more interviews we do, the more Kroms we hear about. We are changing the name, very, very hard to come up with a name, but we have finally agreed on the name "Gravehuffer".

Who started the band and what kind of music did you want to play? Would you see a reference to S.O.D. or M.O.D. as misleading? Who is responsible for the song-writing and who for the texts?

Mike: James, Larry and I were in a punk band together, that bass player left and I went back to my real instrument, the bass. We needed an axe grinder and thought about our old band-mate from Initial Detonation and gave Ritchie a call. The first practice went great. The old I.D. chemistry was still there. We wrote a few songs in that first practice. So as far as S.O.D. goes, we get compared to them, D.R.I. and old crust, which we dig the most. We all love those bands. We were into them when they came out, were all kind of older guys. James writes his own lyrics, he has a knack for it too. Just think of a subject and he's on it. Ritchie and I write the music.

Ritchie: The other guys in the band, who went by the name "Aether Bunny" at the time, asked me to join. As far as style goes, we just each put our own stamp on everything. I'm the metal guy, Mike is more of a punk dude and Larry and James have bits of both styles.

Even though your line-up (see: Metal Archives) does not suggest as much, but are any of the band members active in bands beside Krom?

Mike: Yes, Larry and I are in an experimental project called FREAKFLAG, which is also on Reality Impaired. We have been releasing stuff since 1995 and have a new CD coming out this winter.

Ritchie: They also mess around and record some old-school crust/punk stuff called Moto Mags.

As outlined above, your music is a mixture of thrash and punk. What made you play this particular style and what bands had an impact on you?

Mike: I have been in the punk scene since 1986 then Larry, Ritchie and I played for years in Initial Detonation. We did a few tours and released some vinyl. We have played this style since the first time it was "cool". Ritchie is more of a "metalhead" than the rest of us. We all listen to a lot of music, we are music freaks! We love a lot of foreign bands and listen to almost any genre. .Sabbath, Voivod, Brutal Truth, Napalm Death, Mob 47, Nausea, Judas Priest, Iron Maiden, Anti-schism, discharge, G.B.H., Bad Brains, Pentagram, Daniel Johnston, Devo, Slayer, Black Flag, Residents, Brian Wilson, Bob Marley, Dystopia, Rudimentary Peni, Venom, Minutemen, Ramones, Celtic Frost.....

Ritchie: It's what comes naturally when we play our instruments. Mike is right about our varied influences. It's like a big melting pot of molten lava metal.

Your lyrics are quite explicit about social issues and already the first track gives a clear indication on this issue. Why do you think so many bands avoid such topics and why it is so important for you to voice them?

James: It's weird because I don't even consider myself to be that political. At the same time it's just seems that there are self-evident truths that people tend to ignore and one is America's desire to police the globe. I love the country that I live in but am beyond disappointed at the choices we constantly make to represent us. I would like everybody to know that some Americans despised Bush as much as the rest of the world did. Maybe some people avoid it because it's always easier to keep your mouth shut then saying something unpopular.

What would your opinion on religion be? Do you feel that there is an increase in spirituality or even religious fanaticism in the USA

Mike: Some people need religion, and most of the time it is good. Anything can be a religion, like music, it makes me feel the way people describe of feeling when they are close to god. Music is a vehicle. It opens minds and doors.

Ravi Shankar is music for your soul. Sometimes you want slow music to relax and think, other times fast and crazy music helps, like a rocket bursting at the seams as it blasts off. We play different styles and pieces in our music to break it up a bit. We got to get some kind of rest. It seems boring to write songs over and over going the same tempo and "formula". We just write what we want to hear a band play. We don't give much thought to if it's fast enough or if it fits our style. We just write and play, we will let everyone else sort it out.

In terms of the lyrics, how would you succinctly describe what your music is about?

James: I think we have done a decent job of keeping song topics diverse. Some people may think that's not good because we may not have an overall "theme", but I like to write politics, fantasy and funny shit too. Maybe Napalm Death meets Dead Milkmen?

On the one hand you are rather explicit in expressing your thoughts and anger, while on the other it is difficult to actually understand what you are singing about. So, is this not a tricky aspect that you have some difficulties to bridge; or do you 'demand' from the listeners to be attentive and take the booklet, while enjoying your music? In times of MP3 players this would not only be an inconvenience but seems rather unlikely to happen.

James: I guess you could ask Napalm Death the same question. They have great lyrics with a message but can people really understand what they say? I'm just saying it's not that hard to get lyrics or ask someone what they're yelling about. I just like to scream.

Considering the type of music you play and the topics that you deal with, it is surprising that there are no samples on the album. Why don't you use them?

Mike: We use samples in FREAKFLAG, and INITIAL DETONATION. Just didn't use any on this Krom cd. Maybe we will do some on the new E.P. we are recording this next weekend.

Why did you pick 'Into the Crypts of Rays' for a cover version? Do you have some plans for some additional ones? What kind of tracks would you like to cover?

Mike: We covered that song in Initial Detonation. Celtic Frost is one of our favorite bands, so we just dusted it off and wanted to show tribute to them. We also cover Sabbath - Hand of Doom, Ramones - Commando and Venom - In League with Satan. We were thinking of doing a Devo cover, but we have been on a holding pattern since the tornado. This recording session will be the first time we have all been in the same room together since then.

Seeing as your version is pretty close to the original, I wonder whether you would 'dare' to venture a bit away from the 'source' and interpret it in a strange kind of fashion?

Ritchie: Personally, yes I would love to do that. The Devo song we thought about doing is very different from the original, but still different enough to not sound like something we would normally write. It would be heavy with guitars and real drums but I think it's more about chord progressions and note choices that would be out of our normal comfort zone.

Your debut release had been spread under the banner of Reality Impaired Records. Why did you pick this label and how did you get in touch with Stan?

Mike: We have known Stan since 1990 or so. He already had a Distro when Roger, Jeanene and I started Reality Impaired Recordings. We recruited him for Distro and eventually he took over Reality Impaired and took it to new heights. Larry and I were both in ENCRUSTED, R.I.R.'s first release. Everything we do gets offered to Stan first. We love his attitude. He's from the underground and he gets stuff done. Joplin misses him already.

Who had been responsible for the artwork of your debut release and who designed your logo? Had you been able to give some input into the design or had both been created solely by the artists themselves?

Mike: Our good friend Melvin Marshall did our logo for us. He is a long-time friend and also a local musician. The CD cover is painted by myself. I already had the painting done and we wanted to use it for the cover. Buy a painting from me!

Have you had some chances to play live already? In case this is true, how have the responses been?

Mike: Yeah, we love to play in Joplin, but not many metal heads and crust punks here anymore. We play in Tulsa Oklahoma a lot at a great venue called The Marquee. They're really nice people there and the crowds rule. We shared the stage with Death Angel, Vader, Abigail Williams, Immolation and D.R.I. D.R.I. was so amazing. To see older guys still doing everything their selves gave us hope that you don't get too old to still love the music and the people.

In an e-mail you told me that you have some new music in the tubes and that you are looking forward to record it soon. Why don't you write about this forthcoming ep? How will it sound compared with your previous one?

Mike: The new E.P. we are recording next weekend. We will keep it raw as always. We record and mix our music ourselves. Larry, Ritchie and I all have recording set-ups. Larry has the best one though. He lives in the country so we get that remote dark woods feeling out there. Those are songs we were playing live and we might do a cover or two. It might sound more guitar-heavy since we added a guitarist. Aaron is his name. He's mixing in well with us.

Ritchie: They are a bit different than what's on Chaotic Evil. Most of the songs are in a lower tuning and seem to be darker and moodier. Lots of heavy riffs and more tempo changes. Better dynamics as well. There is one song that is fast and thrashy all the way through. I think James' lyrics are really clever and thoughtful and he actually "sings" a few melodic lines here and there. We're very excited to hear what people are going to think of it.

Some pictures suggest you have had some live experiences already. Is that so? How did these concerts went and what about the responses? (Note from the editor: yes, I messed it up ... two times the same question ... sorry)

Mike: Our shows have been really fun. We love playing in front of people, even if only one person digs it, it's worth it. Most people say "I haven't heard a band like this in 10 years!" Fans say we're old school, but we're just old. There is an underground venue here in Joplin called The Cesspool. A guy named Gene runs it. It's his basement with a full stage and P.A. in it. It's a really cool scene, and the shows are all free!! Hundreds of bands have played there from all over the world. Check him out on YouTube. He has tons of videos from his shows on there.

Ritchie: We seem to get a better response when we play out of our local area. It also depends if the crowd is into metal/punk or bar bands, of which there are many here. Some of our favorite shows have been when there are bands on the same bill that are from different genres. It seems that the more diverse the crowd, the better the show.

Do you have some stuff available for sale right now?

Ritchie: Well we do have our Chaotic Evil CD for sale through various online shops and download sites, such as iTunes, CD Baby, Amazon, etc. There are also links on our Facebook, Reverbnation and Myspace pages that link to stores to buy. CD Baby and Reverbnation have been good at getting the music out there.

How can people contact you? What Internet sites do you use?

Ritchie: We use Facebook, Reverbnation and Myspace. My e-mail is axeattakk@aol.com which I use for band correspondence as well.

Some final thoughts?

Mike: First off, thanks to you oneyoudontknow for taking the time to do this interview and the time for doing your magazine. We love the underground. That's where we will stay. We will send you a copy of the new E.P. as soon as it's done. Support local music and venues. Go see more metal/ punk shows.

Reviews

Pawned Pajamas / Golden Cup / Twilight Owls / Flamingo Creatures

<http://www.fono.tihiiomut.ru/>

You may not be able to acquire this release anymore. In case you are interested in it, some obscure mailorder might still sell it, but you might need some time until you have had the luck finding it. Such is the problem with low amounts of copies; in this case sixty.

A1 Pawned Pajamas – For Claude (10:09) Is There Anything Left To Say? (4:01)

(Germany; Ambient, Experimental, Narration) -_-_- (14:10)

<http://www.lastfm.de/music/Pawned+Pajamas>

A1:

An obscure band and some obscure music. According to the label it is a “collab [sic] between two nice German acts: folk-collagist Baldruin and new new age enthusiast Hering und seine sieben Sachen.” In case you are unable to speak German, the opening might be confusing. In the first sample – in English – the voice indicates that it speaks, towards the listener, from another world; while the second offers the same part as a translation.

The following is expressed:

I'm writing you all this from another world, a world of appearances. In a way the two worlds communicate with each other. Memory is to one what history is to the other: an impossibility.

Legends are born out of the need to decipher the indecipherable. Memories must make do with their delirium, with their drift. A moment stopped would burn like a frame of film blocked before the furnace of the projector. Madness protects, as fever does.

I envy Hayao in his 'zone,' he plays with the signs of his memory. He pins them down and decorates them like insects that would have flown beyond time, and which he could contemplate from a point outside of time: the only eternity we have left. I look at his machines. I think of a world where each memory could create its own legend.

(Source: http://www.markertext.com/sans_soleil.htm; Copyright Chris Marker)

It is a bit difficult to understand everything clearly; especially the references to the person, whose concept is explored in these two samples. The reason for this is the appearance of various types of layers of voices, whose part is accompanied by an ambient texture as well as noise effects.

A quick Google search reveals that this part appears in a film called **Sans Soleil**; which is French for Sunless. Wikipedia (#) does not only provide some additional information on it, the entry includes a link to Google Videos (the segment referred to above appears in the second part, also available on the site) as well, where it had been uploaded since. The voice, the English one that is, was taken from it, while the German one, at least so much can be speculated, points to the version released for the German audience; yes, believe it or not, we over here have the deep urge to use 'dubbing speaker' for (nearly) every film that is shown on either television or in the cinema; yes, we love our language dearly.

Which of these versions is the one I prefer? Well, a film is also a kind of art and should therefore remain untouched and manipulated. Languages have a distinct touch and sound and this aspect gets lost once you translate the words. Monty Python, as least from the perspective of a German, is an example for what should (must?) be avoided. Those unfamiliar with what I am talking about: the early translations for German television are extremely free at times and have nothing to do with the script, making it impossible to understand the original joke.

Back to the topic: In the background the vague fragments of the film – the singing voice of a female – can still be recognized, but the additional layers of ambience as well as the various types of speaking are simply dominant and leave no more room than is just necessary. The music itself consist of various elements: the crackling sound in the background with some rare additional noise effects – like claves – sets the basis for the track, while two calm piano motives set the general mood. Aside from this, also keyboard elements play a role as well, along with a distinct and oscillating ambient texture. The music combines a sedative with a slightly disturbing tone. From the mere sound it seems to want to progress faster than it actually could, because the piano(s) take the tempo back again and again.

Towards the end a voice speaks something in French, which I am unable to understand ... so, there is still some mist surrounding this track.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sans_Soleil

Note:

The question who this person 'Claude', as the title indicates, is, remains an open question as well.

A2:

Well, the second composition is much shorter, has no such samples and the first seconds make clear that the collaboration wants to take the listener to different shores. Are these voices – in the sense of some kind of chant or even moaning or something in between? Anyway, on top of this or in the background are a wind play and some ambient textures; one a dronish minimalist, the other a slightly shrill one.

Compared with the opener of this split, the second track feels a bit stranger as well as lighter. It could have been longer, though.

A3 Golden Cup – Improvisation Pt.2 (8:03) & Improvisation Pt.3 (4:19)

(Portugal; Experimental, Ambient) -_-_- (12:22)

<http://www.8mmrecs.com/goldencup.htm>

Part one is ... missing ... but it can be suspected that it appears on the 'Sogno Elettrico' album; released by Blackest Rainbow, at least Discogs suggests as much; and no, it is not available anymore. I am not surprised.

'Golden Cup' is a duet: 'Luca Massolin' (known for 8mm Records) and 'Maurizio Abate', who is active in several bands. Discogs is able to clear matters up a bit again.

What about the music ... without spoiling too much, even though there are considerable differences between the bands, it is possible to discover a certain amount of continuity in the performance: it becomes noisier as well as more intensive; which would be especially true for the second track of 'Pawned Pajamas'.

According to the label a mandolin and an electric organ had been used for the purpose of creating these two (three ... four ... whatever) compositions. The frequency in the tones has increased and the music has become more hectic, more chaotic and confusing. Despite some constant point or slower aspects, the whole performance is as such as to create in the mind of the listener the image of sitting in a very fast moving train, while watching the landscape, which passes at a ridiculous speed. Some focal points are there, but everything close to the viewer becomes distorted and blurred; impossible to examine or even understand.

This extreme kind of dynamic shifts to some degree, once the second track has been reached. In the background there is this somewhat minimalist melody – drifting into a drone texture –, which is interrupted by a burst of melody, which appears again and again... but once the odd and intelligible singing joins in, it has to fade into the background; only to appear again towards the end.

B1 Twilight Owls – Drunk Woman's Call (10:22)

(Russia; Noise) -_-_- (10:22)

<http://www.myspace.com/twilightowls>

The title of this track is incorrect. By listening to these ten minutes and twenty-two seconds, one does not really get the impression of an intoxicated person. Such a person tends to move through different stages of emotions and what kind these actually are, depends to some degree also on the environment this individual is located in; while at a party, he or she might be able to enjoy this mood, whilst being alone in a bar could result in a sentimental behaviour.

The track does not create such an impression. Also the call remains buried or hidden behind the intense layers of ambient/noise. Fedya, the sole (?) person behind this project, uses a guitar to create a variety of sounds and compared with everything that the listener had to 'endure' on this tape before, this one takes the cake in terms of

chaos and insanity. Really, several melody lines had been woven together in a strange kind of mess. In some respect the music reaches for harsh noise, but seems to have stopped somewhere in between. The label calls it "psychedelic" and without question, with the use of some drugs, it might be an interesting trip indeed. Without it though, it is a bit of a stress to enjoy it.

B2 Flamingo Creatures – Knäuel (12:45)

(Germany; Dream Ambient) - _ - _ (12:45)

<http://www.myspace.com/flamingocreatures>

'Knäuel' translates to ravel and this one word is an ample description of a split album: four bands, four styles, all too often little common ground. Is there a connection, some hidden similarity? At times the listener has the feeling as if the knot is of no less complexity than the Gordian one.

Furthermore, also the band name gives an indication of the style the band plays: a rather calm, dreamy ambient. A flamingo is a curious creature. Remember how it stalks, how it eats and the way it behaves. There is elegance in it and there is some sort of otherworldliness. Such is the last band. In some respect it ameliorates the listener for all the torment, all this offensive noise and inexplicable to and fro of layers that said person had to go through over the length of the tape. .

The break between the fifth and the sixth track is immense. A bit above, the metaphor of a fast moving train had been used, while the viewer is bombarded with all the impressions that obtrude themselves on this person. Here, the contrary is the case. Not hastiness, but rather the inexplicable – as well as inescapable – beauty of a quite desolate place on a forgotten piece of landscape is what might serve well as a short summary of what these Germans – Ronnie Oliveras and Ruth-Maria Adam (also members of Datashock collective) – had in mind when creating their long track. This reference becomes even more adequate, once you mention the occasional noises, whose style resembles the singing of a bird. A sweet melody progresses softly, gently leading the listener through fluffy spheres of rose-coloured beauty. Towards the end electric guitars tune in and try to distort the utopian nature of the scenery, but are unable to break the overarching dominance of the ambience.

To sum the impressions up:

Consistency!? This might be the most 'graven flaw' or shortcoming of this split. Unlike other ones I have listened to before, here some kind of tension is created, as the music becomes more and more intense. More chaos and more fury is introduced with each minute passed, but towards the end everything breaks down just as if nothing had happened. Was it not possible to arrange the bands in a different order? Or maybe exchange 'Flamingo Creatures' with a band, whose art would follow more in line with what the other three offer on this split. Monty Python's famous joke – ...and now for something completely different *explosion* – spoils the scene considerably and leaves the listener quite bewildered. This ... is the impression of the reviewer.

Final note:

Comes with greenish paper J-cards. Limited to 60 copies.



I, Lord Aveu – Lucus (2010)

(France; Pagan/Folk Black Metal)

4 Tracks (CDr – Self-released) - _ - _ (36:31)

<http://lordaveu.bandcamp.com/>

It had been the name that made me stumble over this band. 'I, Lord Aveu' is certainly not something all too common in the black metal realm; as a pseudonym it might not be too outré, though. Aside from this, a translation of the word 'aveu' might create some confusion as well, because in English the meaning would be 'confession' or 'plea of guilty'. It opens a considerable realm of speculation.

The title suggests it already, it is a one-man band; which should not astound too much considering the type of music that is offered on the debut output. 'Lucus', refers to a forest or in the ancient Roman religion even to a sacred grove. It seems natural to pick such a reference for a band, whose musical concept is explores the pagan/folk scene along with the other aforementioned one. Yet the whole matter cuts deeper:

The following is an extract from the writings of **Marcus Annaeus Lucanus**. It is a part of the **Pharsalia** of course, the famous book of the so-called Silver Age.

Now fell the forests far and wide, despoiled
Of all their giant trunks: for as the mound
On earth and brushwood stood, a timber frame
Held firm the soil, lest pressed beneath its towers
The mass might topple down. There stood a grove
Which from the earliest time no hand of man
Had dared to violate; hidden from the sun
Its chill recesses; matted boughs entwined
Prisoned the air within. No sylvan nymphs
Here found a home, nor Pan, but savage rites
And barbarous worship, altars horrible
On massive stones upreared; sacred with blood
Of men was every tree. If faith be given
To ancient myth, no fowl has ever dared
To rest upon those branches, and no beast
Has made his lair beneath: no tempest falls,
Nor lightnings flash upon it from the cloud.
Stagnant the air, unmoving, yet the leaves
Filled with mysterious trembling; dripped the streams
From coal-black fountains; effigies of gods
Rude, scarcely fashioned from some fallen trunk
Held the mid space: and, pallid with decay,
Their rotting shapes struck terror. Thus do men
Dread most the god unknown. 'Twas said that caves
Rumbled with earthquakes, that the prostrate yew
Rose up again; that fiery tongues of flame
Gleamed in the forest depths, yet were the trees
Unkindled; and that snakes in frequent folds
Were coiled around the trunks. Men flee the spot
Nor dare to worship near: and e'en the priest
Or when bright Phoebus holds the height, or when
Dark night controls the heavens, in anxious dread
Draws near the grove and fears to find its lord.
Spared in the former war, still dense it rose
Where all the hills were bare, and Caesar now
Its fall commanded. But the brawny arms
Which swayed the axes trembled, and the men,
Awed by the sacred grove's dark majesty,
Held back the blow they thought would be returned.
This Caesar saw, and swift within his grasp
Uprose a ponderous axe, which downward fell
Cleaving a mighty oak that towered to heaven,
While thus he spake: "Henceforth let no man dread
To fell this forest: all the crime is mine.
This be your creed." He spake, and all obeyed,
For Caesar's ire weighed down the wrath of Heaven.
Yet ceased they not to fear. Then first the oak,
Dodona's ancient boast; the knotty holm;
The cypress, witness of patrician grief,
The buoyant alder, laid their foliage low
Admitting day; though scarcely through the stems
Their fall found passage. At the sight the Gauls
Grieved; but the garrison within the walls
Rejoiced: for thus shall men insult the gods
And find no punishment? Yet fortune oft
Protects the guilty; on the poor alone
The gods can vent their ire. Enough hewn down,
They seize the country wagons; and the hind,
His oxen gone which else had drawn the plough,
Mourns for his harvest.

lucus erat longo numquam uiolatus ab aeuo
obscurum cingens conexis aera ramis
et gelidas alte summotis solibus umbras.
hunc non ruricolae Panes nemorumque potentes
Siluani Nymphaeque tenent, sed barbara ritu
sacra deum; structae diris altaribus arae
omnisque humanis lustrata cruoribus arbor.
siqua fidem meruit superos mirata uetustas,
illis et uolucres metuunt insistere ramis
et lustris recubare ferae; nec uentus in illas
incubuit siluas excussa nubibus atris
fulgura: non ulli frondem praebentibus aurae
arboribus suos horror inest. tum plurima nigris
fontibus unda cadit, simulacraque maesta deorum
arte carent caesisque extant informia truncis.
ipse situs putrique facit iam robore pallor
attonitos; non uolgatis sacrata figuris
numina sic metuunt: tantum terroribus addit,
quos timeant, non nosse, deos. iam fama ferebat
saepe cauas motu terrae mugire cauernas,
et procumbentis iterum consurgere taxos,
et non ardentis fulgere incendia siluae,
roboraque amplexos circum fluxisse dracones.
non illum cultu populi propiore frequentant
sed cessere deis. medio cum Phoebus in axe est
aut caelum nox atra tenet, pauet ipse sacerdos
accessus dominumque timet deprendere luci.
hanc iubet inmisso siluam procumbere ferro;
nam uicina operi belloque intacta priore
inter nudatos stabat densissima montis.
sed fortes tremuere manus, motique uerenda
maiestate loci, si robora sacra ferirent,
in sua credebant redituras membra securis.
implicitas magno Caesar torpore cohortes
ut uidit, primus raptam librare bipennem
ausus et aeriam ferro proscindere quercum
effatur merso uiolata in robora ferro
'iam nequis uestrum dubitet subuertere siluam
credite me fecisse nefas'. tum paruit omnis
imperiis non sublato securae pauore
turba, sed expensa superiorum et Caesaris ira.
procumbunt orni, nodosa inpellitur ilex,
siluaque Dodones et fluctibus aptior alnus
et non plebeios luctus testata cupressus
tum primum posuere comas et fronde carentes
admisere diem, propulsaque robore denso
sustinuit se silua cadens. gemuere uidentes
Gallorum populi, muris sed clausa iuuentus
exultat; quis enim laesos inpune putaret
esse deos?

Sources:

<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/602> & <http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/lucan.html>

The deeds performed by Caesar and written down by Marcus Annaeus Lucanus are actually not uncommon when you think about it. In a modern book about ecology, Linking Social and Ecological Systems: Management Practices and Social Mechanisms for Building Resilience by Berkes, Folke and Colding, insights into the Roman history and how they dealt with their ancient sacred groves are presented. Cultural imperialism is nothing new and may be something that has accompanied man since time immemorial. Today, in our demystified and with the domination of science as well as technology, such intangible aspects are reduced to a minor role and are often belittled by those of the dominant cults.

What might also be of interest to the readers is a translation of the track titles; French is not a language too many might be familiar with.

| | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Fureur sur les Cimes - Déclaration de Guerre | Fury Over Summits - War Declaration |
| 2. Gracieuses Ramures - Invocation | Graceful Boughs - Invocation |
| 3. L'Orgueil de la Chair - Funeste Présage | Pride of the Flesh – Disastrous Omen |
| 4. De la Cève dans nos Veines - Capitulation | Sap in Our Veins - Capitulation |

Note:

The translation was provided by the band.

Therefore – continuing on the pagan/folk aspect mentioned above –, additional instruments appear, a rather unconventional song-writing – with an emphasis on the atmosphere and not on repetition – can be discovered and the music contains a surprising amount of variation in terms of the tempi. There is a nice sort of flow in the arrangements, which make it somewhat interesting to listen to the compositions. You do not get the idea that everything had been crafted hastily.

Take 'De la Cève dans nos Veines' for instance. Those keyboard motives are really neat and also the bass line in the background adds a nice touch to the entire performance. The concept is not cheesy or feels overloaded, because the music itself is comparatively raw. In case someone expected some nice polished stuff with some charming flutes, whose play might motivate you to hug a tree, then the performance of this French band might be of a kind to seriously disappoint you. Do not be taken aback by this, it is still a mixture between folk and black metal, but it comes with a rather nasty touch. Blasts are an important aspect of the music, as they form a counterpoint to the slower and rather folk-dominated parts. Interestingly, the riffs are not limited to the metal genre; the last track even offers some references to post-rock. This aspect should be emphasized in some respect. The listener is taken on quite a trip and this would vary over the course of the album. Sometimes more folk-driven, sometimes with intense drumming, but generally well arranged and thought through, such would be the debut album.

What might astound is the use of the vocals. 'I, Lord Aveu' offers them in a large variety, not surprising actually. Some of them fit quite well with the arrangements and the atmosphere. Nevertheless, those odd screams at the beginning, along with the distorted exclamations at times definitely raise an eyebrow. It feels unnecessary, arbitrary. Would the music work without such an 'extreme facet'? Maybe not solely, but to see it appear on a smaller degree as well as more fitting in terms of the atmosphere could have a positive effect on the music.

The language gap might prevent a full understanding of what the band tried to express. With lyrics that are in French and with a voice that tends to wander off into the extreme spectrum at times, the listener from a non-French country might find it difficult to appreciate as his or her counterpart in France would be able to. From the perspective of a non-native speaker the concept remains hidden to a considerable degree, yet the music is able to compensate this to a considerable. With some polishing and a better production, the band might most certainly be able to attract some attention.

Note:

The CD is limited to fifty copies and comes handmade. The design is nice and well done. Considering the quality of the music not many will presumably be left.



Eikènai – Eikènai (2011)

(Sweden + ???; Experimental, Ambient)

6 Tracks (Tape – DNA Netlabel) - - - (35:22)

<http://dnanetlabel.altervista.org/>, <http://dnacollective.bandcamp.com/album/s-t>

Eikenai are a small project, with some links to the Swedish band Stillheten, which had been covered in some amount in this magazine; issues 1 & 13. The other member of this collaboration is unknown and also the bandcamp entry does not help to clear matters up, even though the texts made available there shed a considerable amount of light on the conceptual background of this release. Nevertheless, the actual description of the content does only reveal as much as to not lift the fog that hangs over this project ... the realm of mystery is somewhat persistent.

Let us make some phrase dropping first:

Eikènai is a mysterious project, [...]

Eikènai is an ethimological [sic] project [...]

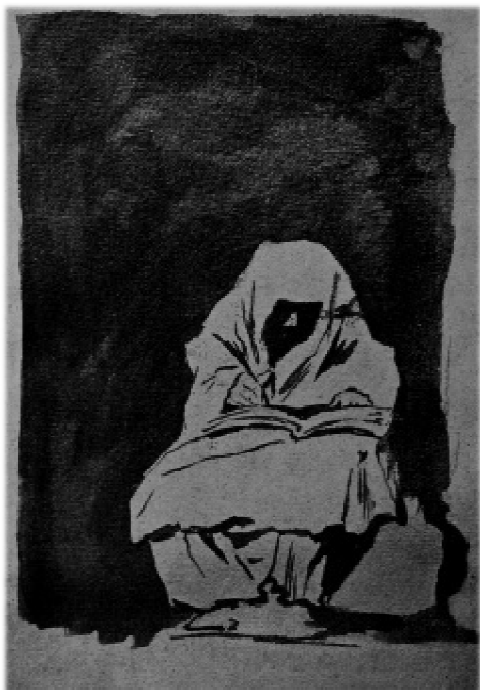
Eikènai has no words, no names. [...]

Eikènai is a visual project [...]

Eikènai is a non-visual project, [...]

Eikènai is a synthesis between ancient music and contemporary music [...]

(all taken from the bandcamp site; see above)



Six tracks, each of them untitled, is what you find on this tape. The music of Stillheten shines through now and then, even though the overall direction of the Eikènai is more experimental than the mixture between folk and ambient; something the Swedish act has offered on several releases so far. When it comes to complexity though, then this new 'act' provides music with a certain resemblance. The listener experiences a certain distance towards him, as the instruments do often appear rather in the background than in the front; no, turning up the volume does not really help. Be it the trumpet or be it the strings, their part seems to be reduced to some sort of facet among others... despite the overall low amount of them. It might be best to describe each of the tracks separately.

1: (5:14)

A droning noise in the background, trumpets turn in, a gong or something similar creates an indistinguishable strange noise. The music, or to be more precise the intensity of the sounds, oscillate: a calm and quite opening increases in intensity, is taken back again, while towards the end the noises return. Intense and haunting would be two words to describe it.

2: (6:04)

Similar to the opener, also the second one has a certain build-up of atmosphere. Drones appear calmly in the background, a strange percussion sound switches to and fro, while a trumpet plays a vague kind of melody over the nearly over the entire length. The billowing sound of this instrument add a certain kind of sadness to the performance.

3: (5:06)

The third track marks a transition. No more trumpets for the moment; rather a curious industrial atmosphere has taken over. A somewhat machine-like sound motives appears throughout the entire track, which is accompanied by the surreal play of an organ. By any means a strange combination, which might confuse the listener, considering what this person has 'endured' in the previous compositions.

4: (3:32)

The shortest track on this tape. In style and arrangement it reminds a bit on Stillheten; this dark kind of ambient and folk, which can be found on their releases. The slightly dissonant and manipulated sound of the strings, those additional effects in the background as well as the similarity in the atmosphere, are a clear indication in this respect. It is strange to experience the twists and turns of the music.

5: (9:10)

Once the shortest has passed, the longest one follows immediately. I would also be the most minimalist on the entire album. Some kind of reduced dark ambient with some noise elements. It gives the impression of sitting in a room and 'enjoying' some sounds that had to travel too long a distance and which appear therefore muffled and at times unintelligible. A concentrated atmosphere is necessary to be able to appreciate this performance.

6: (6:10)

The last track takes the listener back to Stillheten's art. Again this gloomy mixture of dark ambient and folk is evoked, but here an accordion adds a different and slightly cheering touch to the performance. Even though the opening is rather dark at the opening – guitars with ambient textures – , such is gone with the introduction of the squeezebox. As the music continues in this way until the end, the album closes in a slightly melancholic but not particularly dark fashion.

To sum the impressions up:

There are no voices. There are no samples. Often there is nothing that would help to break this dark monotony, this obtruding melancholy. By listening to the opener, some vague memories took me back to the release by 'Cities Last Broadcast', which had been presented in the previous edition of this magazine. I longed for some distortion ... I craved for a disturbing disruption ... but none came.

As the times turn bleaker and as especially in this year the mists turn the landscapes into an impenetrable white, such dark and gloomy tunes might be quite appropriate. Sounds that seem to appear from nowhere, fragments of melodies without a source, noises impossible to identify. Eikènai is nothing for the cheerful, nothing for the summer and nothing for those who long for the positive spirits of their existence.

Stillheten might be darker and more depressing, but this new collaboration takes the listener also in depths of the mind not many dare or want to lay their hands upon. You might want to give the MP3s a try first, which you can find on the links posted above.

Note:

Only 20 copies exist of this release. The release is fully available as a stream on the bandcamp entry.



Brezno – Viharnik (2010)

(Slovenia; Folk Metal)

4 Tracks (CD – Safe & Sound) - _ _ - (16:20)

<http://www.facebook.com/brezno>, <http://www.myspace.com/breznospace>

While browsing a bit through the bands at the Metal Archives, I stumbled over the Slovenian one Brezno. I also hope to get some music from Albania soon, but when this will happen is impossible to tell; when I recall it correctly, the band is still busy recording the stuff. Anyway, Viharnik would be the first and so far only release by this band and it takes the listener into the realm of folk ... at times.

Metal, a bit. Heavy, in limits. Folk rhythms were woven into the concept and these are supported by the guitars. Judging from this aspects alone, one might suspect that the band took a rather conservative approach, but the vocals take the whole approach into a different direction. There is something ethereal – Žanjica – to them at times, something that reminds on the music spread by the French label **Prikosnovénie**. The whole concept seems rather to be folk metal than metal with folk influences. The aforementioned track has a considerable amount of flutes, accordion and acoustic guitars, while the opener 'Zarja' has all too common – not to say cliché-loaded – samples of some sort of battle, it is actually nothing more than a mixture between ambient with some spare folk elements. 'Glasnik' and 'V nebo' would have metal aspects on such a level that they are worth being mentioning. There are even some short solos.

Everything is nice, polished, peaceful and flows in a neat way. Nothing annoying, nothing disturbing but also nothing too memorable. A solid performance but nothing else. Take a folk band from an East-European country, add some metal to it ... and there you go. Listenable, but by no means impressive.

Vahrzaw – Black Resplendent Waters (1996)

(Australia; Death Metal, Black Metal)

6 Tracks (Tape – Self-released) - _ - _ - (25:39)

<http://www.myspace.com/vahrzaw>, <http://www.reverbnation.com/vahrzaw>

Vahrzaw – I wonder how the IPA transcription would look like – may be on the right track. Instead of letting their old music be buried under the dust of the ages, they have made it available for free at their bandcamp site. It is therefore possible to get a glimpse into the bands history without having to spend tons of money at Internet auctions or to use 'illegal' download sites in order to acquire pieces of their music.

After a series of name changes – look it up at their Metal Archives entry – the band finally settled this aspect by picking 'Vahrzaw' and 'Black Resplendent Waters' would be their second demo; Shadows of the Forest would be the first and saw the light of day in 1995. It might be interesting to note that on it earlier version of the tracks can be found: Shadows of the Forest, Conquering The Heavens, Souls Awakening; Namiros, appears only on the online version and has not been released on a prior version.

What are the differences between these two early output – an additional single release is ignored for a moment. Well, Shadows of the Forest had been a live recording, while the succeeding one had been recorded in a studio. Furthermore, the MP3s at the bandcamp site were taken from a CD and not a tape, which adds a surprising clear



and powerful sound to the performance. An analogue artefact, worn down by the years of its existence, would most certainly lead to a different sound and impression. It is important to keep this aspect in mind. Therefore, real copies sold somewhere at some market or forum will most certainly have a more muffled sound; unless they are bootlegs of the new version.

The music on 'Black Resplendent Waters' is a hybrid between old school death metal and black metal. On the one hand there are the driving rhythms of the instruments – often a mixture of blasts interspersed by slower segments – while on top of it the screams in style of the latter genre were placed. What references might be given, considering the release date of this demo? Gorgoroth's Pentagram comes to the mind, but the art of the Norwegians is more simple structured in the riffs, which are also more on the black metal side of the spectrum. Sacramentum is a band that should be mentioned as well. In both cases the pre-1996 outputs are referred to of course.

It may be interesting to search in the annals of the metal history in order to find out how this demo had been received back then. A quick search in the Internet revealed, as expected, nothing. Anyway, by listening to the songs on 'Black Resplendent Waters' no fascination unfolds itself, no rhythms leave a lasting impression.

The whole approach is simply too one-dimensional as the band tends to fall back on something called 'norsecore'. A dense layer of distorted guitars in the background, a lot of blasts and a generally simplistic structure. Yes, small solo parts appear, even short keyboard segments and there are even additional vocals styles – growls and clean ones – but when they appear they create the impression of being actually rather superfluous; they do not harmony with the rest. Surprising elements, some nice twists and ideas are the core flaws of this demo and the raw but somewhat charming sound is not able to compensate this.

Why not mention another piece of music from the same year: Musta Surma's first output. A similarity between these band would be the reliance on norsecore influenced art, but executed in a different degree. The Finns approach is much more likely to grab the attention of the listener. It has a more natural touch and flow to it, while the 'Aussies' added elements to their concept, whose part sounds leaves a rather tiring impression. The combination of the guitars – see above – and the fast paced drums reaches the point of becoming rather predictable quite soon and the little variation does not help in this respect either. What about the breaks? They are there ... but often nothing can be said of them.

Vahrzaw's demo sounds a bit too forced. The music is dark, often well balanced, quite raw and executed on a good level, but it fails to mix these aspects into an appropriate brew. It is simply aggressiveness for aggressiveness sake, while the atmosphere desperately tries to receive some attention and break through the dense wall created by the band. Everything is simply a bit too hectic, bereft of a nice flow and therefore of something that would impress the listener in such a way as to give it another spin.

Do not get me wrong here, it is not a bad release. It is easy to enjoy it; not to mention be astounded by the 'clear' sound – those who own worn down tapes will know what I am referring to. Nevertheless, the compositions are often too conservative and too bland. They pass by and leave nothing. What about a praise due to its historical significance, or to be more precise, what about some milder tone considering the year when it had been released? From the perspective of an Australian metal fan maybe, from a broader angle such seems to be rather futile.

Note:

The music has been made available at the band's bandcamp site:

<http://vahrzaw.bandcamp.com/>

The review does not end with the paragraph above. Seeing as some tracks appear on early outputs already, it might be interesting to compare these and discover through this whether they have changed over the course of the years. A small comparison will reveal the similarities:

| Midgard | | Vahrzaw | | | |
|------------------------|-------|------------------------|-------|---------------------------------------|-------|
| Midgard | | Shadows of the Forest | | Black Resplendent Waters | |
| 1994-08-14 | | 1995 | | 1996-02-10 | |
| Souls Awakening | 02:28 | Shadows of the Forest | 05:22 | Shadows of the Forest | 04:13 |
| Kingdom of Darkness | 01:31 | Conquering The Heavens | 02:46 | From Where the Midnight Whispers Call | 05:39 |
| Conquering the Heavens | 02:42 | Souls Awakening | 02:36 | Souls Awakening | 02:18 |
| The Black Storm | 02:42 | Memorial Ashes | 06:17 | Black Resplendent Waters | 05:27 |
| Symbol of Baphomet | NN:NN | | | Conquering the Heavens | 02:35 |
| Carrion | NN:NN | | | Namiro's | 05:24 |

As one can see, there are some slight differences, but the general concept of the tracks seems to be constant over the years. What is interesting in some respect is the way the sound and the style evolves. While the first take has the garage/rehearsal room sound as well as some punkish touches, the later one proceed into a more balanced and polished area. Sadly, the vibe the early got lost in the meantime. Shadows of the Forest shows a difference though and the new version is shorter and tighter.

Slaughter of the Innocents / Obscure Oath (2009)

24 Tracks (CD – Rotten Roll Rex) -_-_- (31:10)

<http://www.rottenroll.de/>

Obscure Oath

(Germany; Death Metal / Grindcore)

8 Tracks -_-_- (9:36)

<http://www.myspace.com/obscureoath>

The wild and chaotic realm is opened by the German band Obscure Oath and a glance over the track lengths reveals that their music is rather short as it does not move beyond 1:25 minutes. Furthermore, the band does not seem to be that active. Even though they had been founded in 1996 and the first demo had been spread in 1997, only one additional demo, aside from this split, has seen the light of day since. Maybe it is quality over quantity, then?

The music is some straightforward old-school death metal with grindcore elements as well as distorted screams. Everything is fast, kept short and in some respect rather powerful as well as 'friendly'. Just listen to the opening intro. A piano plays a motive from some classic piece of art and even though the Germans' concept is much more aggressive than the opening idea, it remains in the back of the head all the time. Some sparks from the hardcore and grindcore scene make an appearance, which adds a certain drive to the performance. Various types of combinations of vocals, a tight fast drumming and a good production. Maybe everything is a bit too polished and nice.

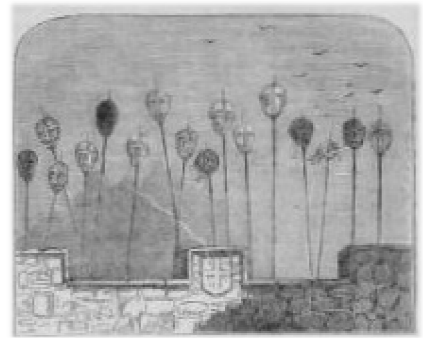
Slaughter of the Innocents

(Germany; Death Metal / Grindcore)

16 Tracks - _ _ _ - (21:34)

<http://www.myspace.com/sotigrind>

The second band is of a quite different nature and right from the start they set the stage for their kind of music: a sample from the Warhammer 40K universe – from some videos, when I recall this correctly – and the machine is let loose. Actually, this is quite appropriate because the music of the German band 'Slaughter of the Innocents' is a real blast and without any sense of mercy.



More furious, more grindcore elements, a dirtier sound and also shorter at lengths; (0:04 – 3:49). According to the notes Soti's part had been recorded in a rehearsal room and it is possible to hear that. Unpolished and with some balancing issues their music had been fixated, which adds a nice contrast to the first band on the one hand, but has nevertheless some slight negative effects on how the music is perceived on the other. A difference to the first band is also the constant bombardment of the listener with no mercy in sight. It is hardly possible to catch some breath, it is hardly possible to relax at any given point on their part of this split. Similar to the first band on this album also here the influences are rather taken from the old-school branch of the genre than from the modern/recent one.

To sum the impressions up:

Aggressive and powerful music from two bands, but executed in two different styles. Both of them offer rather intense music, but executed on different levels and approaches.

Harpoon – Deception Among Birds (2011)

(USA; Experimental Metal, Thrash Metal, Grindcore)

8 Tracks (CD – Seventh Rule Recordings) - _ _ _ - (37:01)

<http://www.seventhrule.com/>, <http://www.myspace.com/harpoonrockin4u>

Excuse me ... is this really Harpoon? I had to skip their 'Double Gnarly / Triple Suicide' album because their label never got my (registered!) letter with the money in it. Yes, in the third millennium we have not reached the point in which such trivia will reach the recipient no matter what. Still feels like the freaking Stone Age. No, I hate electronic payment ... and yes, feel free to call me paranoid.

Anyway, while the first impression reminds on the music the band started with, the more of it passes the more it leaves a certain kind of confusion. Some facets have remained – like the vocals and the hardcore/punk influences in the arrangements – but the concept appears in a much broader as well as less violent kind of way. Clean vocal parts, slow interludes and rather progressive riff structures work as a counterpoint to the aggressiveness which still has a considerable impact. To present one major difference between the two albums, just take at the track lengths:



Double Gnarly / Triple Suicide

(12 Tracks; length: 23:17; longest: 5:35; average: 1:56)

Deception Among Birds

(8 Tracks; length: 37:01; longest: 7:21; average: 4:37)

Well, the band seems to have decided to explore their music on a larger degree. From the current perspective, the days in which the compositions offered aggressiveness on the spot seems to be over. Thrash metal / grind, such is the description used at their profile at the Metal Archives, but the music has moved a bit away from this. There are elements of post-rock, there is doom, there are progressive parts, there are symphonic keyboard segments but there is nothing like someone would expect it. Metaphorically speaking, it seems the band threw a 'harpoon' into the wide ocean of the metal universe several times and landed each time a different and even stranger combination of elements on shore. Would the band offer more on the skill level and would their song-writing be more progressive, then their art might even reach for the weirdness Civil Disobedience has gained some reputation for.

By listening to the music one question imposes itself upon the listener: what does the band stand for and what kind of music do they actually play? Where is the red line in this? Deception Among Birds is an ambitious release, this is most certainly out of the question, but a track like 'Troglodyte's Delight', all the quality and nice arrangements that it contains put aside, sounds quite displaced and its length is by no means the only reason. Being rather doomy with a variety of other influences, it generally lacks the aggressiveness Harpoon tends to offer on a certain level. Despite the hardcore influences which can be discovered in the opening of it, the more it progresses the more it becomes a boring and dull piece of art. No drive, no energy ... just some AOR-worship. Interestingly, the succeeding composition 'The Cut of His Jib' continues in a rather 'normal' fashion; except for the vocals though and those clean ones are an odd counterpoint to the dominating hardcore screams.

Harpoon should decide what they want to play. Music with balls or with Valium, because they cannot have it both ways. Shall it be music like the title track (first part of it only) – the double bass drums are a welcome element and create together with the guitars a nice atmosphere – or a strange mess like 'Troglodyte's Delight'? The attempt to have it both ways seems to be a step in the wrong direction. This latest output from the Americans is not bad, but it is definitely not far away from a 'low' level. I would not spend money on it ...

Note:

You should get their shirt with the seal on it though, because it looks great and I will continue to wear it in the summer days.

Aschansonnier – Due Ritratti De' Personaggi Illustri De' Nostri Giorni (2011)

(Italy; Experimental Ambient, Noise)

3 Tracks (Tape – DNA Netlabel) - _ _ - (39:36)

<http://dnanetlabel.altervista.org/>, <http://dnacollective.bandcamp.com/album/due-ritratti-de-personaggi-illustri-de-nostri-giorni>

My knowledge of Italian is limited. Even though I had the chance to enjoy loads of Latin at school, it is difficult for me to get into the 'modern version' of it. Therefore, the translation of the titles are a bit of a mystery and prevent a full disclosure of the underlying concept of this release. Furthermore, the information on the label's homepage indicate that the music had been written with the intention of using it on stage, in some kind of theatrical play, which makes the process of writing on the tape a bit difficult. With no visual at hand, the writer's only element at hand are the sounds and the music.

Interestingly, there had been an event in which the music had been used for a theatrical piece. How much of it and what impact it had on the performance of the actors, lies outside of the knowledge of the reviewer. In any case, should someone be interested in some impressions from this play, then the following link is able to provide them:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/julesart/sets/72157626774131913/>

1: Giuseppe da Copertino (20:37)

http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Josef_von_Copertino

Again and again the music spins, again and again the poor computer had to deal with the MP3 files, which are on the hard disk. It is a tricky release and even the first track is of such a surreal nature that listening to it creates a certain amount of distress and confusion. Where to start? How to sum it up appropriately? Without any visual aspects at hand and with a booklet that contains only some vague information, the process of writing on this monster of a composition is a tricky thing indeed. Twenty minutes of an endless to and fro, a conceptual width that is astounding in one respect but enduring in the next.

In terms of equipment the band used a mixture of electronic equipment and normal instruments. No vocals appear here and the dynamics range from calm and at times even non-existent to intense and rather noisy. 'Aschansonnier' only used short melody elements which characterize a certain moment or passages, but progresses overall with the music through a variety of stages and approaches. I wonder whether it would be possible to use ballet in order to add some visual elements to the sounds.



Guitars, noise, trumpets, electronic drums and much more appear in the opener. It is rather disharmonic and strange.

2: Don Giovanni Cannibalizzato (17:06)

Even with only minor knowledge of Italian, the title is quite suggestive, is it not? Also the pictures referred to above give a clear indication on how to interpret this title. It is important to note or to emphasize that the second track comes in an entirely different style. The sound of shoes stamping heavily on a wooden floor is accompanied by the sound of organs and through this a combination of a distinct rhythm and an ambient texture is created. Later trumpets join in and enrich with their calm play the music in a nice way. Contrary to 'Giuseppe da Copertino' the music is less influenced by chaos and has a less artsy touch. Instead, it rather takes the listener through the ideas and motives.

The longer the track goes, the more the complexity increases. Chants of women make an appearance, additional drone layers appear in the background and then all of a sudden everything breaks down ... except for the constant steps ... this surreal percussion like motive in the background. Around five minutes close to the end a piano tunes in, the steps pass away and everything becomes a lounge like atmosphere. It is a stark contrast to everything that had 'happened' before. Finally some structure, some clear melody ... finally something to concentrate on ...

Does the tape end this way? ... Guess ...

3: Ballade Pour Une Anemie A' Vin (1:52)

Those familiar with the releases of the DNA Collective might be familiar with the references I am going to make: Cenere Muto. Yes, the play of the trumpet shows some similarity. The rest consists of several guitars whose play creates a calm ambient influenced melody. Well, it is a ballad after all ... but it is strange, a bit noisy and hardly normal.

To sum the impressions up:

The bottom line is that the bottom line is something the writer of these lines feels unable to make out. How does everything hold together? Why are the tracks of such large variety and have so little in common with each other? From the mere perspective of the listener it is hard to make out the story – is there one? – or the broader context and such. All there is has to do with the sounds ... just the sounds. A video would have been nice ... or some drawing, stills or at least textual impressions.

For the connoisseur, the hipster and all those who look for stuff outside the ordinary routine.

Note:

Limited to 15 copies. The release is fully available for stream on the bandcamp entry.

Anticosm – The Wreckoning (2011)

(USA; Thrash, Black Metal)

5 Tracks (CD – Born of Chaos Records) - - - (22:29)

<http://myspace.com/anticosm>, <http://bornofchaosrecords.com/>

The tenth anniversary of the band draws close and the band's third official release has just seen the light of day. In order to make the listener aware of the general tendency of this American band or to draw the immediate attention on their art, the music starts off with a bang. A hammer into the face and no mercy is shown in any respect. Anticosm make clear that their path does not only seem to point towards a more thrash influenced approach, but a characteristic of their debut album 'Against the Cosmos' – a certain orientation of appealing to the masses while on stage could not be rationalized – pops up here on an improved level. Unlike the legions of bedroom bands of our days, the ambitions of the Americans are a bit larger and they write tracks with a dynamic and style that is certainly able to get a crowd going; even more so with the new stuff, because it tends to be more aggressive at times as well as providing more 'sing along parts'.



Some differences towards the debut album can be discovered and by listing them a certain change in direction becomes apparent. Folk elements? Gone. A non-English language? Gone. Strange samples? Lost to the the wind. Black metal elements? Reduced. Thrash metal parts? Increased. Indeed, between 'Against the Cosmos' and 'The Wreckoning' quite a revamping of the style has been taken place. In some respect it might be fair to say that Anticosm concentrated on the core elements of their art and threw all those – and at times neat – elements overboard. What had been subliminal on the previous major recording has become a core aspect now. The Americans responded to my previous review and acknowledged that fans tend to perceive *the music* [as] *seeming to be written for live performances*. Now, you cannot discuss that away any more. It hits you in the face ... and right from the start.

Blackish thrash is what awaits the listener in four compositions and a surprising cover version – see below – completes the latest instalment. Abrasive guitars, solo elements, a proper support by the drums – not too dominant, but nevertheless with a lot of drive – and the vocals appear in a large variety: croaking, screams, partially clean. Interestingly, the longest track on this album would also be the slowest and even though the style is somewhat 'ballad-like' it is not cheesy in any way. The well crafted play of the guitars, the nice variations of the motives and arrangements make it an interesting counterpoint to the general style of the band; the succeeding track marks a return to the band's general direction already. Over the entire course of the release the instruments have a good amount of power and even the bass has been granted with some room.

Ain't Talkin' 'bout Love (Van Halen cover)

First of all, what about the length? The original has a 3:50 one, while the cover clocks only 3:00. Yes, it is played a bit faster. Well, the high pitched voice did not make it in the new version but the solo did. Of course, Anticosm plays the track in their own slightly nasty and dirty type of way, which add a nice touch to it all. Even though it comes kind of surprising to hear Van Halen on a metal album, the interpretation is actually quite good.

Better than the debut? It is hard to compare the two band. Yes, the evolution Anticosm has taken over the years make it appropriate to clearly differentiate between these. The new one offers a tight and at times merciless blast of thrash metal, while references from the older releases can be discovered by those who are familiar with them. In case someone expects some furious music like Witchaven offers it, then this person will be disappointed. Here everything a good touch of melody and is rather reduced in the tempo. Disaster meets Venom maybe ... and with some different vocals ... references are always a pain in the ...

Note:

Their label has a good amount of stuff from the band in stock right now ... in case you have missed some earlier stuff.

Dying Upon Sacred Hands – Bindead by the Truth

(Philippines; Melodic Death/Thrash Metal)

3 Tracks (MP3 – Self-released) -_- (18:04)

<http://www.myspace.com/dyinguponsacredhands>



The second release and they will call it a day soon. Once a new band is formed in the next year, 'Dying Upon Sacred Hands' will officially split up. 'Bindead by the Truth' would be the latest output by the band and in terms of the style it reminds on old-Swedish melodic death metal; In Flames for instance. Add to this a better production and an urge to keep the pace high and the breaks low and you get a better impression of the what these Filipinos play. There are no keyboards here, also metalcore-influenced screams make no appearance but a sample opens the second out of three compositions.

Yet the band is not able to shake off the impression that the music sounds dated. Yes, indeed. Be it the dynamics, the melodies or the atmosphere, someone familiar with the evolution of the metal genre would undoubtedly recognize the similarities or the influences. The melodies are well crafted, the solos are also interesting and well executed and also the production is by no means bad. You can enjoy the three compositions easily, but you might grow weary of them soon. While the music itself is not bland, it simply lacks a clear distinct identity and might become tiring after several spins. There are hardly any surprising elements or facets that make this output shine in some respect. Solid old-school melodic death metal and nothing else.

Amputation Spree – Terminal Velocity

(USA; Brutal Death Metal)

4 Tracks (MP3 – Self.released) - _ _ _ (13:05)

<http://amputationspree.bandcamp.com/>

The first thing that comes to my mind when I think about 'Terminal Velocity' is the pc game that was released in 1995; anyone still familiar with it? It had been a nice 'arcade-style flight combat game' (Wikipedia), which was quite some fun to play back then; if my memory does not deceive me. Times have changed and the graphics have improved since, whereas this game looks rather antiquated and unspectacular. Considering the time frame that lies between back and then, it is still amazing what leaps the game and computer industries have taken since.

Anyway, the American band Amputation Spree has nothing to do with this game and also their lyrics do not play a homage to this relict of the modern age. Sadly, the Metal Archives entry does not help to clear matters up much, because the current description of 'Esoteric, Abstract Gore' is anything but self-explanatory. A quick glance on the genre tag above makes clear that listening to the vocals would not help much in this respect and the expectations are fulfilled here of course.

What might raise an eyebrow though is the general reluctance of the band to avoid a furious and aggressive approach, like it is found all too often in terms of this genre. The brutality is rather expressed in through the slow- and steadiness in which the music progresses. Death metal is being offered, but it comes with some occasional keyboard layers, reverb distorted vocals and a rather surprising mixture between slower doomy passages and blasts. There is a good amount of melody in the whole approach and even though the band mentions progressiveness on their bandcamp page, this aspect should not be stressed too much. The compositions are generally too short (2:34 – 3:48) to explore the ideas on such a degree that the aforementioned aspect would take effect on a considerable level. Therefore, despite some nice ideas now and then, nothing really leaves a mark. It is not possible to discuss the breaks away and it would be unfair to describe them as bad, but they fail to have a lasting impact on the performance. The last track provides some examples on what went wrong here: the breaks are either repeated – without any variation – or appear – like in the segments with which everything fades out – just completely random and without any kind of flow.

A drum-computer is generally a separate story and the impact are known. In terms of Amputation Spree's Terminal Velocity the production is as such as to drown it a bit in the background. Anyway, overall it is a solid release with some nice ideas, whose quality still waits to be explored. It is possible to enjoy this output, but you cannot shake the feeling of that with more complexity as well as some additional twists the release might have become better.



Reality Impaired Recordings 2001 Compilation #2

Stan of Reality Impaired Records once sent me a strange CD and it has the title: Reality Impaired Recordings 2001 Compilation #2. On it you will find a lot of obscure bands and folks, whose art is anything but normal. Let us take a dive through it.

1. Witch Throttlegush – Ode To A Vice (2:31)

Rock music with a nice drive. Some skatepunk influences appear as well. Has a touch of rawness and garage sound. Good to listen to.



2. Testicle Bomb – Huffing Gas And Spray Paint (3:46)

3. Testicle Bomb – Hippieism (1:02)

Well, the music takes a different direction and turns towards something more noisy and sludge-influenced. The vocals are clean, have singing and avoid screaming like it is common in the punk and hardcore scene.

The second track is some kind of rant, which has a similar tone like 'Reefer Madness'; a propaganda exploitation film, whose goal had been to raise awareness about the danger of drug use. Here the devil is supposed to live in rock, alcohol, drugs and homosexuality. Quite hilarious to listen to.

4. Trixie And The Merch Girls – It's So Nice / Suck My Ass It Smells (1:58)

A punk rock band with a female vocalist ... a strange title and strange music and strange lyrics... the second part of the track more than the first, which should not surprise considering the topic it seems to deal with.

5. It Takes All Kinds – Salvation (1:04)

6. It Takes All Kinds – Hippie Football Freaks (0:20)

Same female vocalist? Fast and on the spot punk music ...

The second track is another rant against 'hippieism'.

7. Vaginal Discharge – Christian Rock (1:40)

Sing along: Christian rock would you please go away ...

Funny great song ...

Sing along: Christian rock would you please fuck off
and with some great lyrics

Sing along again: There is nothing rock 'n' roll about Christian anyway

So much truth ... really makes me want to get their album ...

8. Cauliflower Ass And Bob – I Used To Have A Job (1:35)

9. Cauliflower Ass And Bob – Fish Sex (0:42)

Again a band with some sweet sarcastic lyrics. In terms of the music some anti-folk is presented. A guitar, some noisy trumpet thing and a voice.

Fish Sex ... is another rant and a really strange one at that. I do not want to disclose too much here.

10. Andy – Plymouth Rock (1:05)

Really ... acoustic music with odd lyrics.

11. Hearseberry Taco – Gnome Diarrhea Taco (2:22)

As some might have noticed, the bands on this release are anything but normal on this album. The contrast in terms of this band is that the thoughts wander off again and again. They deal with topics like 'a donut that sticks in a bum', throwing up, weiners, underpants and gnome diarrhoea; to name some. Some acoustic music with additional instruments sums it up.

12. Guaranteed Katch – Long And Brown (live) (2:05)

A great band ... I have several of their releases and they are really able to rock. Some dirty punk / metal hybrid is played by them. Sick lyrics and some great atmosphere can be found on their outputs.

13. Travis – Happiness Pie (4:29)

A freaking long song... hell ... after all this bombardment of short and rather snippet like stuff, it feels strange to hear a composition of such proportions. Kind of experimental rock/noise something. Electronic beats in the background, while two kind of vocals sing about something that is impossible to make out. Cool.

14. Mind Orgies – Braintube (3:47)

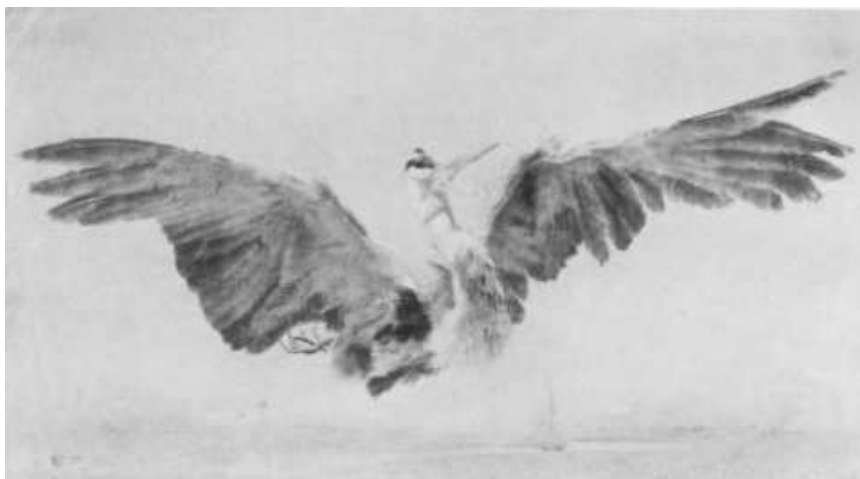
Yo ... and to continues odd and complex. Industrial metal might give an indication of what to expect here. Confusing stuff ... I really mean it. Not 'Braintube' but brainfuck. Oscillating sounds and layers, strange beats ... a confusing opening ... Reality Impaired Records has never been a haven for the sane kind of music anyway.

15. Lucid – Pills (6:48)

Amazing, there is track of nearly seven minutes length ... and now what the ... hardcore in a really messed up way. This samples wanders off into ever more obscure realms. It is hard to sum up the music in any meaningful way. Power electronics meets hardcore meets odd samples. Yes, maybe the title refers to what is necessary to take in order to be able to appreciate the music in its fullest. It may be interesting to know whether the band has released stuff outside this sampler.

16. Freak Flag – Goodbye... (4:22)

Another band I am familiar with and of whom I own several releases. Not a spectacular track here ... they can do better. Some electronics, with an Eastern guitar playing and samples added to this. Odd title at such a place on the album.



17. Satan's God – The Retro Cabaret Denizens (5:30)

The Chipmunks on drugs... at this point you might consider suing Stan of RIR. It would be not be too far-fetched to state that this very piece of art might please the demon god Azathoth.

18. Deauce Das – L-kcDF-j'xdto;zkxrt (3:26)

In ThIs TrAcK tHe ToPiC oF rAtHeR oDd CoMmErCiAlS aRe ExPIOrEd. It Is QultE DiFfIcUiT NoT tO gEt SuCkEd InTo ThEm AnD tHe CoNtEnT ReMiNdS Me On SoMe StRaNgE 'wOmEn'S oNIY cOmMeRclAL sErLeS I HaD tHe ChAnCe To DiScOvEr On ThE UbU RaDiO WeBcAsT OnCe. It WaS As CoNfUsInG aS iS tHiS oNe.

19. Hollywood 1958 – Don't Tell Me How It Ends (2:21)

and I will also not tell how it sounds ...

20. 360 Sound – Ode To Ash (3:29)

Quite cool actually. A xylophone, a guitar, some background ambient and something that resembles a snare drum. The melody progresses neatly, some strange timing issues but actually the atmosphere is quite neat... the last words in this track are "three minutes".

21. Walking Talking Zombies – Marriage Songs (1:27)

Are you familiar with the voice of Stephen Hawking? This electronically manipulated one, which has a somewhat surreal sound? No imagine it being a bit more distorted, while bass and drum play some kind of raw punk metal thing. Would be interesting to hear more of this band.

22. Inter Nos – Voglia Di Pensare (1:03)

A dense track... with some distorted guitars, which create a wall like sound in the background. Really nice drive, cool vocal elements – two voices and chants – and this would be another interesting band. Some kind of death/doom ... music that is thick as hell.

23 The Camorra – The Gov'ner (1:49)

And the rawness is back. Hardcore meets metal ... not my cup of tea ...

24. Mixomatosis – La Matanza De Timor (1:52)

Sick ... death metal meets grindcore. Get a six-pack and enjoy ... great shit.

25. Oral Uterus – You're Poor And You Vote (0:08)

No.

26. The Earwigs – Flesh Tuxedo (2:23)

Well it is noise ... and it is surprising to hear it on this sampler or to be more precise, to hear a band whose art is reduced to this one element. Rather harsh stuff, which has the tendency to change to a HNW.

27. Sonic Disorder – We're Drunk (3:25)

Maybe you can only review this track properly when you are drunk ... and as I am not in such a state I have the feeling that it is impossible to do the track justice.

28. Insomnia – Desolate Past (4:57)

A strange sample, distorted and repeated over and over again ... an intelligible mess.

29. Mermaid In A Manhole – Disillusionment Phase (1:58)

Harsh noise with a fucking sample ... no, not a 'fucking' sample, but a sample about the fucking life and fucking thing ... so, it is on fucking after all. Fuck.

Quite a lot of tracks here ... and a good amount of sick music. Some albums of the bands are still available at Reality Impaired Records: realityimpairedrec@yahoo.com

Black Bile – Cloacal Meditation

(Cyprus; Black Metal, Doom, Torture Doom)

1 Tracks (CDr – Self-released) - _ - _ (28:49)

How to write on such a long composition? How to write on a track of such length that is of such a strange nature? The Cypriot band Black Bile has spread one release so far – in an edition of 100 copies – and it is of a sick and most certainly peculiar kind. The title seems to indicate a certain tendency towards coprophilia, a fascination with man's droppings and dirt. From the perspective of psychoanalysis humans are known for having a certain strange attitude towards fluids, excrements and other 'wasteful' elements of the body. Try to spit out your own saliva and drink it again. Even such a simple thing creates a kind of disgust in us... even more so is true of all those things that contain decomposed aspects of our food. It is interesting how the title tries to bring an aspect to the attention of the listener, which is generally been avoided; for numerous reasons, I believe and it would lead too far off would this be discussed in any meaningful sense.

Of course it would have been easy to expose man's insecurity regarding this topic in a somewhat humorous kind of way; to expose it in such a way as to give us pleasure and without the immediate need to get too close to the aspects we actually despise. Yet a meditation in an environment, which is at any chance filled with an unbearable stench, loaded with ghastly ever-swarming flies, not to mention a hoarding ground for various types of bacteria and diseases, will most certainly create in the mind of a lot of people an imagination of horror and disgust. We, who have gotten used to a sanitary environment, might shrink at the mere prospect of having to do through such an ordeal. To go to, or to be more precise, to sink to such a low level, might require to abandon the normal behaviour of man and to fall back on the primitive rites of the dawn of the human species; a time when we have not yet begun to reach a conscience and were therefore unable to place our actions into a broader civil code. Nevertheless, even this distorted view on your species, reveals nothing but a subliminal love, which has found expression in a strange and to the most (common) people a level of being incomprehensible. Such a person does not break with the society, it merely reaches for the lowest of all levels. Even the pittance, the crumbs thrown to him or her, to quench the inexplicable need for 'doing good', at least in certain limits that is, are not accepted ... only the dirt, the excrements, those things unwanted by man are deemed worthy for the purpose of a meditation. An even "extremist" level would be to break the bandage with the civilization altogether and to leave for places that are rarely or maybe never inhabited by man.



Well, the first term of the title has been discussed in some depth, but what about the second? A meditation is often associated with a relaxation of the mind, a certain state in which some sort of inner balance has been reached and the person has become 'one' with the surrounding environment; to put it with a bit too much cliché in it. Due to the breadth of this topic it is difficult to present every possible version in this review, but the aforementioned definition fits the purpose well enough. Just imagine the implications that would arouse from the title. Black Bile – in itself a combination that might turn off a considerable amount of people – used a combination of words that are sure to create some stir as well create a vague sense of interest. How might they deal with this topic? To what levels do they try to bring their art? Is it by any means even offensive or disgusting?

What might strike the listener as surprising is the reliance on guitars and drums instead of some artefact whose purpose it would be to create a strange unintelligible form of noise. It would not be too far-fetched to suspect a metal background, which manifests itself in a different project. What this might be remains unknown at the current point, as no information on the person behind Black Bile has hit the surface so far.

Back to the topic:

The song-writing shows a certain amount of freestyle, with some loose arrangements and conceptions, while a consistent and constant flow can be identified. Even though the intensity tends to vary in degree, the listener is never able to really shake of the dark impression, the nastiness, the dirt, the subliminal sickish tone. A term that has hit the surface some time ago would be 'torture doom' and some points of reference would be Senthil or Wormphlegm. Compared with the 'normal doom' concept, this one is rather an inversion of the atmosphere and general spirit. Screams of agony and pain make up a core element in the lyrical expression of the bands. It may be difficult to separate it from depressive black metal at times, because on certain levels both genres show a certain amount of conceptual intersection.



I: 00:00-

In terms of Black Bile it is important to emphasize the general absence of any large tempo variation. Over the entire length of the output, the listener will never be taken to some surprising shores or something that would work as a counterpoint. The music is driven by the drums and their steady pace adds a strange focus to the performance, while the cymbals sound like a parody of Buddhist bell. Of course the guitars play into this and the riffs appear in a similar fashion. Especially this instrument has a certain amount of rawness and distortion, while the drum lack a manipulation that would be worth mentioning.

II: 05:12: -

Here the first alteration takes place. The cymbals are switched and played at a higher speed.

III: 6:47: -

The atmosphere breaks down as well as the tempo. The focus shifts on the vocals and various types of these appear here: screams, intelligible murmurs.

IV: 9:59: -

Some kind of melody played by the guitars takes over the lead and appears repeated again and again. Furthermore, the intensity increases and this has to do with the vocals, whose part tends to drown every other element at times.

V: 12:23: -

Another break down again and the music has become a mixture of II and IV; also in terms of the riffs. Later the play with the cymbals from I makes an appearance as well.

VI: 16:23: -

Drums become scarce, guitars vanish completely, voice absent at the first minute or so, but returns with a strange clean style; reference: distorted public address announcement; language does not seem to be English. Noise effects and drone-like textures play a more vital role here.

VII: 18:38: -

The music is back on track and resembles V with the strange voice from VI making a reappearance. Furthermore, the screams are quite intense here.

VIII: 21:51: -

Another small breakdown ... but the overall style remains the same, everything has just become a slower again. Later the cymbal play from II appears again.

IX: 25:04: - end

Drums vanish, guitars appear rather as noise than with clearly distinguishable riffs, the vocals give the idea of throwing up or being in such a state, some kind of "breakdown". Intensity of the instrumentation has decreased on a massive scale. Samples of swarming flies and some additional one in the background. The album fades out with a gentle drone-like texture.

From this rather short summary of the content on this album it is possible to draw some conclusions. One, the music does not progress steady and, two, Black Bile might have intended to create some disturbing end, which can be drawn from the way the atmosphere builds up and how the screams/moaning/whatever towards the end give the impression of some kind of breakdown. Maybe the absence of additional guitar elements along with the silencing of the voice is supposed to indicate the inability of the person to continue with this special state of mind; maybe this person has suffered to such an extent that the necessary concentration cannot be build-up again or some kind of pathological impact prevented a further exploration. It remains an open question.

Aside from this aspect, also the general idea behind the guitars might raise an eyebrow. While they help to create the dark and depressing atmosphere, they actually fail in building up something that would resemble or facilitate a meditative state. Despite the repetitiveness and all the minimalism with which the concept of the band is loaded, it actually fails to deliver this promise in a conclusive kind of way. Similar criticism can be brought forth in terms of the drums of course. Even more disappointing might be the noise elements, because their part is often unable to add something meaningful to the performance at all.

Furthermore, the overall conventionality in terms of the concept as well as the arrangements leaves a bitter taste. The reliance – or to be frank: the limitation – of the facets on 'real' instruments, while electronic facets, like noise, industrial and dark ambient, play a minor and maybe even a negligible role, is what limits the way this 'extreme' kind of music is perceived. Black Bile falls into the same pitfall as many other bands of a similar conception tend to do on a daily basis. Despite the darkness and the sinister tone of it all, the flow lacks a certain counterpoint to support the intention of the artist. Considering what had been laid out in the paragraphs above – the discussion of the title – the actual expression of it, strikes as having been done in a rather conventional kind of way. The flies (17:00 - ff) add some sort of nice touch to the performance and give an indication of what the Cypriot band tried to create, but it ends there... it is 'final' ... and is received as a strange addendum, with no relation to the art whatsoever. Are there are no other sounds possible? Vomiting, choking, the sound of loosing body fluids, everything that can associated with the toilet and the sanitary system ... etc. The ones towards the end sound displaced and without any clear connection to the rest of the performance. The tiger comes without teeth so to speak.

Furthermore, the (nearly) endless vocal performance create something that can be discovered on countless releases in the black metal circus: the excessive use of one elements drags down the quality of all. Especially the screams, those hysterical and in some respect tiring screams, are unable to leave a lasting impression. Yet this would not even be the bottom line of it all. Throughout the entire release several different kind of expressions were used, but the actual reason why they had been picked at a given time remains unknown; this aspect is especially apparent in terms of the "distorted public address announcement" one. Elements were thrown together and the listener is left without a clue.

'Cloacal Meditation' is not a bad release, it is merely unconvincing on a variety of levels. You may enjoy it on the outskirts, but once you enter into the depths of it, you will discover that it is not conclusive after all.

Butoh

My first adventure in the realm of 'butoh' had been through the homepage of Artilleria Pesada. There a DVD of the Spanish project Soizu had just been released and made available for sale. Furthermore, a video of a performance of this kind of dance had been linked to as well. Sadly, the version on Vimeo appears to have been shortened considerably, which takes away a good amount of the actual acting as well as evolution of the dance.



Before continuing reading the following reviews, it might be best to get some impression of what the writer is talking about:

http://www.ubu.com/film/juku_butoh.html

(Here a seven minute performance of a Japanese butoh group can be downloaded. Furthermore, the explanation on the site give a good impression of the basic elements used for this kind of dance.)

<http://vimeo.com/11963948>

(the one referred to above ... it had been cut short. If anyone would find the full version somewhere, then please let me know. The focus on noise music makes this one more interesting amongst others)

Some basic elements of butoh:

- the dancers appear covered in white powder
- the performance contains generally slow movement, sometimes even hardly recognizable ones
- the clothing (may be costumes) is very reduced and sometimes used for the acting on stage; along with other tools (again see the videos linked to above)
- music plays a vital role and can coincide closely with the movements of dancer. At some performances this person even sings and an example for this can be found at vimeo as well (<http://vimeo.com/26881375>)

For additional information visit Wikipedia, please:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Butoh>

(it offers merely a glimpse on the topic, but the links are worth visiting)

Soizu

(Spain)

<http://soizu.blogspot.com/>

Three releases are discussed below. One of them is a tape with music on it, while the others are DVDs and contain videos as well as photographs.

Rropavyeja (2010)

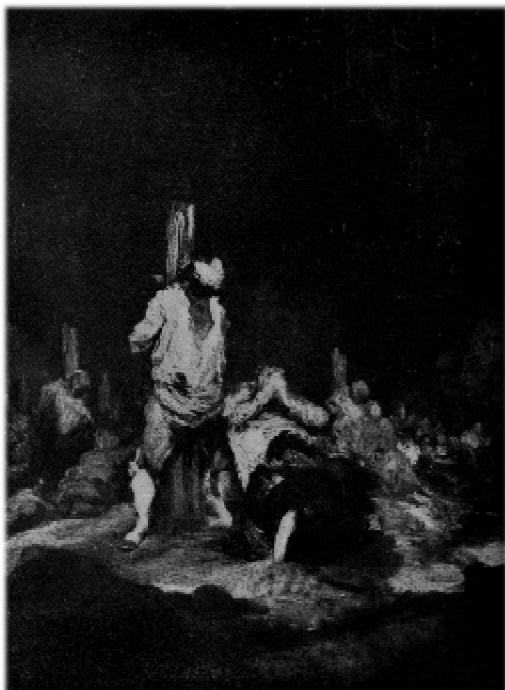
(Tape – Afeite Al Perro) - _ _ - (33:16)

<http://afeitealperro.blogspot.com/2010/06/soizu-rropavyeja.html>

First of all, due to my limited knowledge in Spanish (or Catalane) I am unable to make out how many tracks appear on this tape release. By ripping it with Audacity seven of these were discovered, but this might not actually be true. As the cardboard booklet gives no indication whatsoever – or it does but the information lies beyond the grasp of the reviewer – to actually write on this release is by no means easy.

First of all, the music on the tape differs from the one used for the butoh performances. Here, the Spanish band offers some kind of noise with a variety of styles and concepts. Also the lengths of the tracks differ considerably: 0:40 – 8:08; based on the way I had ripped the tape. At times the music wanders off into the harsh noise region,

while other moments have a much more sedative, even meditative atmosphere. Vocals and recitations make an appearance as well, while various kind of supporting instruments – bells for instance; see also the videos – were used for the creation of noises as well.



The music is not constant. It wanders through various stages of intensity and harshness. Being uncertain whether the way the tape had been ripped reflects the actual way it was meant to be, it is hard to point to something definite on this artefact. At times, the music opens in a gentle and calm way, with only a few droning textures and a few noise facets in the background; the more the whole concept progresses though, the more the sound evolves into a denser and intense art. A difference would be the calmer compositions: they tend to remain this way and unfold a kind of mystical atmosphere.

The release has its moments ... but it is difficult to place it amongst the other oeuvre of the band.

Note:

Limited to 100 copies.

The DVDs:

As a tape is merely a medium for audio signals and not suited for visual aspects, the first release of this band gave nothing but a presentation of the basic outstretches of the sound, while the basic and more elementary facets remained untouched. Considering that the two recent releases had been DVDs, the one analogue artefact seems rather futile and displaced.

Impertenencia (2010)

(DVD – Artilleria Pesada)

<http://a-pesada.blogspot.com/2011/01/soizu-impertenencia-dvdr.html>

Content:

1 DVD on a cardboard paper in a cardboard foldout. On both pieces of paper a lot of information can be found but in a language the writer of these lines is unfamiliar with; looks like Spanish ... no, not like in the proverb! Everything comes printed and also several interesting drawing can be found, which in style resemble the vague outlines of the butoh dancers.

Content DVD:

1 Video + several pictures from a different session.

The video:

It has a length of twenty minutes and the scenery for the performance is some art studio or gallery. People are attending it and are watching it while drinking a bottle of beer; something which adds a surreal nuance to it all. The recording had been done with a hand camera, with the obvious result of a bit too much shaking and a loss of control. A tripod would have had a positive effect here.

There are no additional light effects or the like and the music is created with the help of guitars as well as electronic equipment. In terms of the atmosphere it should be noted that they tend to differ considerably over the length and range from short moments of harsh noise to very calm or minimalist ones. You can clearly see the interaction between the musician and the dancer ... or at least recognize as much.

It lies beyond the intention to spoil the entire performance, but some aspects which came as a surprise: no interaction with the clothing or any other item – here merely the dance and the mimic of the women are used. Some 'drastic' movements, like falling down; which might surprise when you consider the general slow movement in this type of dancing.

The pictures:

There are quite a lot of them and they are shown in a slide show with some mixture between ambient and noise in the background. It is interesting to see where butoh is actually shown and these additional visual impressions help to get a clearer view on how this dance is done and what elements are used in it.

Bitartean (2011)

(DVD – Ronf Records)

<http://www.ronfrecords.com/releases/rnv001.php>

Content:

1 DVD in a box. No additional information or paper.

Content DVD:

2 videos + several pictures from several sessions.

The videos:

Once the menu pops-up two videos are available to the viewer. Both are from the same performance but recorded from different angles and ways. The first would be with a fixed camera on some tripod, while the second seems to indicate that a person was running around the stage and recording the dancer with another camera. Judging from the shaky behaviour it seems to indicate that it had been carried around in some way. Personally, the first one seems to be more appropriate for this kind of thing, because the viewer has better access to the entire performance and is more able to grasp the complexity of the moves. I fail to see the benefits from close-up shots.

Yes indeed, this time there is enough space for this kind of performance and also a proper use of light equipment in order to support the dancing in a proper way. Furthermore, it is also possible to get glimpses on the equipment used for the creation of sound. It is therefore easier to get a better understanding of what happens here.

The butoh performance should be divided into four parts; at least from the perspective of the reviewer. There is the opening, the scene on the ground, the part with the red light and then there is the last one. It is hard to name them, so these vague descriptions should suffice for the moment. In case someone watches the DVD, the separation becomes pretty obvious.

The idea of using a musical box came as a surprise somewhat and also the distortion, this mocking of the melody, added a nice twist to the dancing. In terms of the style a variety of elements were visualized: the use of objects, facial expressions (distortions), frantic behaviour and the work with light; the shadows on the ceiling were neat to





look at. What facets butoh can have and how the dancer can act on a stage I presented in a good and fascinating way; thanks to the work of the camera of course.

Also the music is good and reflects the motives appropriately. There is no constant melody in the style, but progresses in such a way as does the dancer. Sometimes droning, sometimes a bit harsh, then mocking and towards the end silent and calm. There is skill ... you can feel and hear it.

The pictures:

There are some problems with my DVD when it comes to the pictures. There are some scratches on the surface – done by me, I had some severe difficulties in getting the DVD out, could this be the result of it? – and they prevent me from watching all of them. In style they are similar to what had been written in the previous review, but they show other performance at different locations.

To sum the impressions up:

Well, butoh is a strange kind of dancing that might disturb you at first. When you think about it, then this Japanese dance form seems to be more appropriate for the noise music than

ballet for instance. The amount of nuances, the complexity of the performance and the distortions which can be expressed in a variety of ways, seems to work more closely together with the way this music genre is often perceived. It may be best to experience this kind of dance in reality and not just on the flat screen of a computer monitor. Judging from the variety of styles and concept, judging from the videos uploaded at vimeo for instance, it seems like a small microcosm. A lot to explore, to understand and to be puzzled about. A realm for the imagination and the mind, something that breaks with the endless monotony of modern day cinematic. It is also a glimpse into a society that we Westerners have some difficulties in actually understanding: Japan. "Lost in Translation", the film by Sofia Coppola comes to the mind.

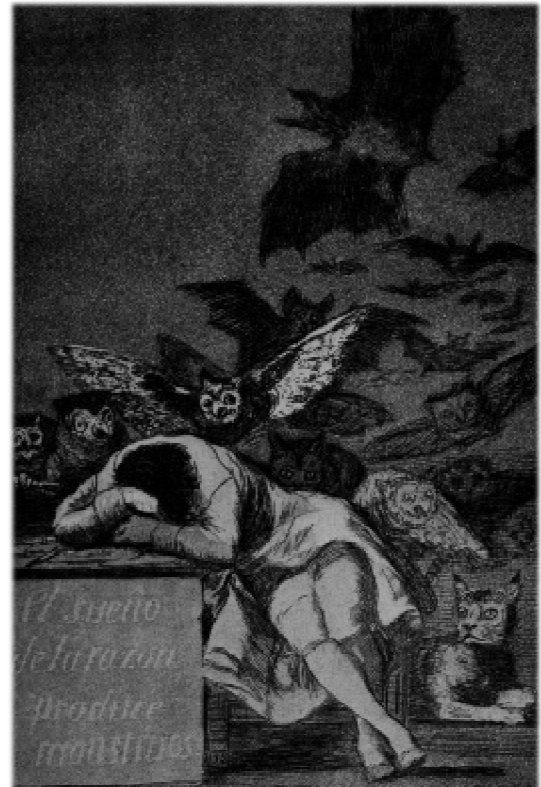
Epoch – Epoch

(UK / Northern Ireland; Thrash Metal)

4 Tracks (Tape – Self-released) - _ _ _ (13:52)

The band Epoch are no more. Nearly two years have gone by since Jason Barriskill has passed away at the age of only 34. It is a pity indeed. When I contacted him first, his e-mail address had been available at his profile at the Metal Archives, he replied to my mail readily and even offered me for free the releases which I was missing of the band's discography. From the mails that had been exchanged, he seemed to be a nice person and was willing to share a lot of information regarding his music and his idea of it. Should I share a sentence from him on his political view? Is it possible to simply place it here without a proper background and explanation? It seems futile somehow.

I originally discovered this demo together with a couple of others at eBay and for a price that was so ridiculously low that it is not worth mentioning it. The band Epoch is a quite obscure one and even in the Internet hardly any information can be found on them or their albums. Maybe this is the reason why so little attention had been paid to the auction. According to a review on an Irish metal site, their releases were mainly spread at their concerts, and it should not surprise therefore to find it quite difficult indeed for a German to obtain any of them.



What is the band's music about? A mixture of black metal (vocals) webbed in a song structure Voivod once used on Negatron or in some respect also on earlier albums. Add a somewhat psychedelic atmosphere and/or Hawkwind influenced sound to this and you get a good impression of their general idea on this first demo. This combination of (here: abnormal) sound samples and riff-motives, are a clear reference to the former band, with the exception of the vocals, whose concept is rather inspired by more extreme metal genres. Being generally screams with an extreme distortion, they give the music a good deal of aggression and move the atmosphere on a level – or into a direction – Voivod was never able to achieve. There is something disturbing and intense to it all, something a lot of bands are rarely able to achieve. Comparisons with noise rock, the noise scene and also the thrash metal one are difficult, because Epoch has mixed them all together in some respect. When you think of a young band, whose music had been recorded in a garage or a rehearsal room, then you might expect a certain amount of rawness and a lack of proper balancing. Here, such effects, even though you cannot discuss them away, seem to play not much of a role. They merge together with the overall noisiness and nastiness of the Epoch's approach and give the tape a characteristic sound that might take the listener by surprise. It is easy to distinguish the performance on this analogue artefact from countless of others.

Furthermore, even though the vocals are quite monotonous and offer hardly any kind of variation in their expression, their abandoning would strip the music of a fascinating and distressing facet. Though it should not be slurred over the fact that these extreme screams leave no room for facets between enjoying them or not. Some might even say the band overstretches the limits of endurance in respect to the voice unnecessarily, because there are no (!) words or phrases recognizable over the whole length of the record. It should be noted that a listener who is hardly familiar with the darker genres, will have a difficult time listening to the demo and might be annoyed by the 'horrific' vocal expressions. To me they are unique and fitting, yet improvable in their style and mixing.

Beside this extreme facet of the music, a good deal of Voivod can be found in the way the songs are written and how samples are used. Like stated before, Negatron is clear reference and in some respect also earlier releases. Yet Epoch never reaches for double-bass loaded motives, but sticks rather to lower or mid-tempo parts in their songs; often minimalist in design, but always with an intense atmosphere. The bad productions lead to an overwhelmingly dominance of the drums, which often drowns the sound of the guitars as well as the bass; especially when samples are used. Hence listening to the music is an ambivalent experience and hampered by the lack of professional equipment for the recording/mixing process.

In contrast to a lot of other bands of the underground scene, the release of Epoch has a special touch with its rawness and unbalanced sound. The songs are catchy, have breaks and are quite interestingly written. Unlike compositions of other bands Epoch's songs are not that monotonous in their attempt, but are with their clear reference to the thrash metal scene quite enjoyable; despite the muddy sound. Imagine songs like Projekt X or Negatron with a darker atmosphere and with a slower tempo. Percussions are an important factor in the compositions and on this demo it is the part of the snare-drums to get some momentum into the music. Space Holocaust is the best example for this and can be compared to The Tower of the Phobos album which was released some years after this demo. In the background are often a much distorted and reverb loaded samples, which give the music a space-like sound; remember those cheesy science-fiction films with their strange sounds. In parts also the guitars use this particular style and play extreme long lasting accords which range over several of octaves; an important factor of Epoch's music.

Some words on the cover artwork, because it is hard to make out what had originally been used in order to create it. No, it is not Cthulhu and I can safely say that Jason had been amused by this comparison. The explanation is much more simple and might astound in some respect: what can be seen there is the skull of a cow leaning on a wall. Nothing mystic, nothing obscure ... just some strange and blurred stuff. Yes, eyes can be deceiving.

I like this demo. Do not ask me why, but the sound of the band is unique. The songs are raw and intense, but never annoying or boredom inducing. This demo is a recommendation to those who like underground metal and the old releases of Voivod. Get it if you can.

Some recommendations:

Huun-Huur-Tu at Live on WFMU's Transpacific Sound Paradise, Jan 22, 2011

http://freemusicarchive.org/music/Huun_Huur_Tu/

This band is known for their Tuvan throat- and overtone singing. You should really give this music a try, because in atmosphere and sound it differs considerably from what we perform in the west.

Lost Resolve

<http://www.facebook.com/LostResolve>

Mark R., the person behind 'Ov Hollowness' and Arkodaemik – both have been covered in this magazine extensively –, has a new project called Lost Resolve. In style is in a somewhat post-black metal fashion. A review will appear in the next edition of this magazine.

Jozik Records

<http://jozikrecords.blogspot.com/>

Sorry folks, I still did not have the time to rip the last batch of tapes I bought from them and worst of all, they have some new stuff already. Yes, three new tapes can be acquired and in style they range between ambient, drone, psych-folk ...

Golem tapes

<http://golemtapes.blogspot.com/>

Despite the name, the latest batch of stuff spread by the label is on CD and not on some kind of analogue artefact. I have not listened to the music so far ... sorry ... but they look neat. Better than nothing, ey? The entire batch still waits to get ripped ... to MP3s that is. Samples are available on the label's site.

Sóley

<http://www.myspace.com/ssoolleeyy>

Beautiful music from Iceland ... yeah alright, it is a bit commercial, but who cares? At least it is less annoying as the stuff created by Björk, whose lyrics I often cannot stand. I bought her debut very recently and am looking forward to get their latest output soon.

Fækal Omsorg

<http://shitcore.dk/fxo666/>

Do not expect operatic, sweet tempered music here.

Shit Music For Shit People

<http://shitcore.dk/smfsp/releases.html>

Nomen est omen?

Chaosane

<http://www.myspace.com/chaosane>, <https://www.facebook.com/chaosane>

Some aggressive shit from the northern part of Germany. Powerful music with a female on the mic whose vocal chords definitely scream for mercy. They have just released their debut album.

Friesenblut

<http://www.friesenblut-horde.de/>, <http://www.myspace.com/friesenblut>

Another band from the northern shores, another debut. This time more traditional and cold black metal is offered. Professional printed CD and booklet ... lyrics are partly in German.

Agatha

<http://www.myspace.com/agathatrio>

I bought their 'Getting Dressed For A Death Metal Party' output not too long ago and even though the title might suggest otherwise, it is some kind of noisy punk. All female band. The best thing ... in the booklet you can actually dress them up and therefore play with them you bastards.

Caro Maledicta

<http://caromaledicta.blogspot.com/>

It might take some time until we all will have a chance to hear some new stuff from the Irish band Caro Maledicta. They are currently on hold. Nevertheless, you should still try to get their Benediction Ep which is a deeply disturbing piece of art with a unique type of vocals.

Jute Gyte

<http://jutegyte.bandcamp.com/>

They have a new black metal album out, which you can either buy or download. The link above will lead you to this experimental piece of art. For more information on them, you might also check the 13th edition of my magazine, which has an interview with them.

Syven

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Syven/179171838780488>

Remember the previous edition of the magazine? The band Syven (side-project of Nest) has the debut release out. It can be bought here: <http://www.vendlus.com/> It has a larger focus on metal than Nest.

Mummifier – Advanced Mummification Procedure

<http://grindcorekaraoke.com/album/advanced-mummification-procedure>

Death metal and available for free. Tape can be bought here:
<http://www.hurtstohear.com/>

Irish Metal Archive

<http://irish-metal.bandcamp.com/>

Old and obscure demo stuff from Ireland ... can be downloaded for free. Make sure to visit their blog as well:
<http://irish-metal.blogspot.com/>

BFW Christmas Album

<http://www.bfwrecordings.com/releases/Christmas/2011/>

Yeah, it is bloody Christmas time again.

(Nearly) Last but not least:

Erik Idle

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BqfZUX5svCg>

Fuck Christmas ...

Sources of the pictures:

<http://www.archive.org/details/adolfvonmenzelde00wolf>
<http://www.archive.org/details/adventureinphoto00thania>
<http://www.archive.org/details/annaesarcholo03pariuoft>
<http://www.archive.org/details/avonmenzelliebha00knacuoft>
<http://www.archive.org/details/caricaturewithum03newy>
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<http://www.archive.org/details/drawingsofsirejp00bell>
<http://www.archive.org/details/johncassellsillu02smit>
<http://www.archive.org/details/illustratedlondo01bick>
<http://www.archive.org/details/paintingsdrawing00hisp>
<http://www.archive.org/details/congresshotelhom00pauliala>

Outlook

The interviews that did not make it will be added

and interviews beside these are planned as well

negotiations regarding reviews are underway ...

maybe poems again (it is hard to find some that would fit this magazine.)

